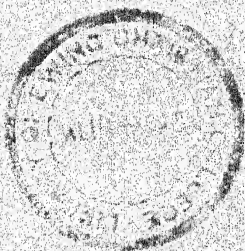


SPY STORIES



EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY VINCENT STARRETT

CLEVELAND AND NEW YORK



THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY

Published by THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY

2231 WEST 110TH STREET • CLEVELAND • OHIO

FORUM BOOKS EDITION

First Printing September 1944

Books in Wartime

"Books are weapons in the war of ideas."

—PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

This book is manufactured in compliance with the War Production Board's ruling for conserving paper.

It is printed on lighter weight paper, which reduces bulk substantially, and has smaller margins with more words to each page. The text is complete and unabridged.

Thinner and smaller books will not only save paper, plate metal and man power, but will make more books available to the reading public.

The reader's understanding of this wartime problem will enable the publisher to cooperate more fully with our Government.

H C

COPYRIGHT 1944 BY THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The World Publishing Company makes acknowledgment to the following authors, agents, and publishers for permission to use the stories indicated:

The author, for "The Army of Shadows" by Eric Ambler, copyright 1939 by Eric Ambler.

The author, for "Code Zed" by Anthony Boucher, copyright by Anthony Boucher.

The author, for "A Man's Foes" by Pearl S. Buck, from *Today and Forever*, The John Day Company, Inc. Copyright 1940 by Pearl S. Buck.

The author, for "The Envelope" by J. Storer Clouston, copyright 1920 by J. Storer Clouston.

The author, for "A Battle Over the Tea-cups" by August Derleth. Copyright 1933 by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company for Oriental Stories.

The author, for "Dilemma at Shanghai" by Vincent Starrett, originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, May 1942. Copyright.

The author, for "The Road Without Turning" by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, originally published in *Adventure Magazine*, copyright 1932.

The author, for "Career" by William C. White, originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 31, 1936. Copyright 1936 by the Curtis Publishing Company.

- Albert & Charles Boni, Inc., for "Parker Adderson, Philosopher" from *In the Midst of Life*, by Ambrose Bierce, copyright by Albert & Charles Boni, Inc.

Brandt & Brandt, for "The Pigeon Man" by Valentine Williams, from *The Knife Behind the Curtain*, copyright 1930 by Valentine Williams.

Curtis Brown, London, for "Cunningham" by W. F. Morris.

Dodd, Mead & Company, for "My Revelations as a Spy" from *Frenzied Fiction*, by Stephen Leacock, copyright 1917 by Dodd, Mead and Co., Inc.; for "Supper with Madame Olshausen" from *Bagatelle*, by George Preedy, copyright 1931 by Dodd, Mead and Co., Inc.; and for "A Tall Story" from *The Paradoxes of Mr. Pond*, by G. K. Chesterton, copyright 1937 by Dodd, Mead and Co., Inc.

Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., for "The Traitor" from *Ashenden: or The British Agent*, by W. Somerset Maugham, copyright 1927; and for "The Informer" from *A Set of Six*, by Joseph Conrad, copyright 1908, 1936, by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

Denis Conan Doyle, for "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" from *His Last Bow* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., for "Death on Post No. 7" by Frank Gruber, from *The Third Mystery Book*, copyright 1941.

Little, Brown & Company, for "The Little Lady from Servia" from *Peter Ruff and the Double-Four* by E. Phillips Oppenheim.

Charles Scribner's Sons, for "Peiffer" by A. E. W. Mason from *The Four Corners of the World*; and for "Somewhere in France" from *From "Gallegher" to "The Deserter"* by Richard Harding Davis.

Ann Watkins, Inc., for "The Proverbial Murders" by John Dickson Carr, originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, July 1943. Copyright.

A. P. Watt & Sons, for "Espionage" by Dennis Wheatley, copyright.

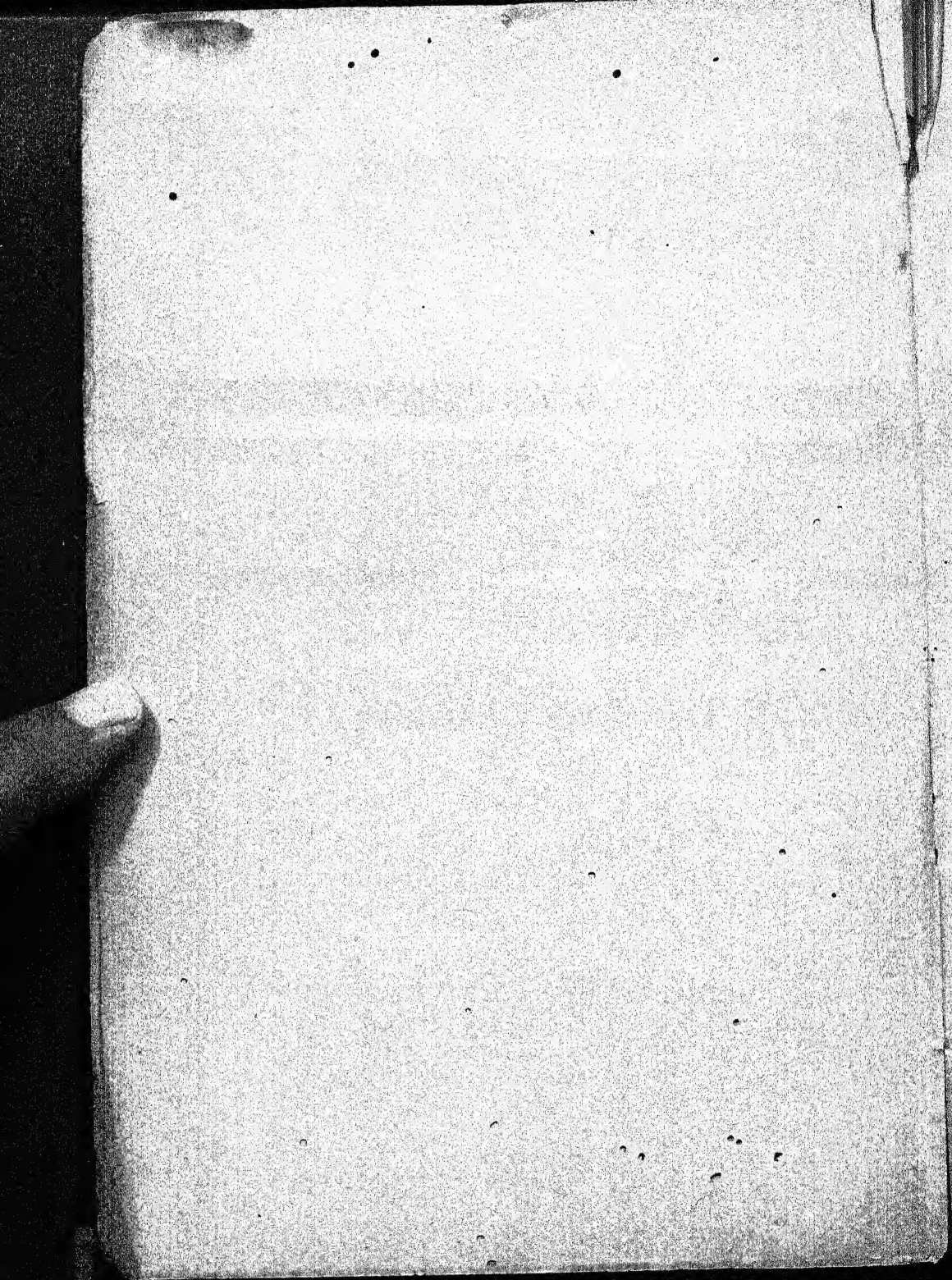
Pearn, Pollinger & Higham and Ann Watkins, Inc., for "Flood on the Goodwins" by A. D. Divine, copyright by A. D. Divine.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	VINCENT STARRETT	11
THE TRAITOR	W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM	17
THE ARMY OF THE SHADOWS	ERIC AMBLER	47
CAREER	WILLIAM C. WHITE	63
A MAN'S FOES	PEARL S. BUCK	85
CUNNINGHAM	W. F. MORRIS	109
THE ENVELOPE	J. STORER CLOUSTON	127
FLOOD ON THE GOODWINS	A. D. DIVINE	141
THE PIGEON MAN	VALENTINE WILLIAMS	151
THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS	SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE	169
PARKER ADDERSON, PHILOSOPHER	AMBROSE BIERCE	195
ESPIONAGE	DENNIS WHEATLEY	203
CODE NO. 2	EDGAR WALLACE	217

THE INFORMER	JOSEPH CONRAD	231
"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"	RICHARD HARDING DAVIS	251
SUPPER WITH MADAME OLSHAUSEN	GEORGE PREEDY	269
THE ROAD WITHOUT TURNING		
	MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON	287
A TALL STORY	G. K. CHESTERTON	301
THE LITTLE LADY FROM SERVIA	E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM	315
PEIFFER	A. E. W. MASON	327
THE PROVERBIAL MURDER	JOHN DICKSON CARR	339
DEATH ON POST NO. 7	FRANK GRUBER	357
CODE ZED	ANTHONY BOUCHER	413
A BATTLE OVER THE TEA-CUPS	AUGUST DERLETH	419
DILEMMA AT SHANGHAI	VINCENT STARRETT	425
MY REVELATIONS AS A SPY	STEPHEN LEACOCK	439



INTRODUCTION

IT IS RELATED on strong authority that along about the year 1490 B.C., twelve men were sent by Moses, the Lawgiver, into the land of Canaan, with instructions to spy out the land and the people living there. That may not have been the earliest instance in history or literature of the use of spies, but it is early enough for our purpose, which is to suggest that espionage is an old and sometimes honorable occupation.

A little later, old inhabitants will remember, about the year 1451 B.C., the celebrated Joshua, who led the Hebrews into the Promised Land, dispatched two spies to Jericho and a lively series of adventures resulted. His agents were hidden by Rahab, a harlot, on the roof of her house, while the king's men searched high and low for them without success. As a reward for her services, Rahab and the members of her family were spared at the fall of the city. There is a nice piece of dramatic business at that point in the story: as a mark of protection, a scarlet thread was hung from the window of the harlot's house and raiders, seeing it, turned aside. Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim has yet to imagine a more colorful incident.

Still later, in Bible times, say about the year 1140 B.C., a ravishing

trollop named Delilah, the first recorded woman spy, was in the employ of the Philistines, who used her home as a hideout while the lady herself was working her wiles on the famous Samson—a dirty trick. From this it will be seen that espionage is either honorable or dishonorable depending on the point of view; that is to say, which side you are cheering for. No doubt the Philistines thought well of Delilah; perhaps they still do.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of spies: spies of fact and spies of fiction. In some degree they resemble each other, but not conspicuously. In Secret Service, it has been said, an agent should be able to see through a brick wall, read minds like a medium, and be able to hear the grass growing. There may have been such master spies in the history of the world, but obviously they are to be found more often in fiction than in fact. According to Mr. Frank Gervasi, who has met and studied many factual specimens, there are three kinds of real life spies: good ones, and mediocrities, and punks. In general the punks are caught and shot, and in general the good ones don't look like Greta Garbo or Ronald Colman; they look like the tailor around the corner or the drab little woman who sat beside you on the bus this morning.

Mata Hari, the best advertised spy of our time, was a punk. Thanks to Hollywood and the newspapers, she epitomizes the fictional concept of a female secret agent; but the truth is, she was only adequately decorative (she was 39 years old when she faced a Paris firing squad), she was not very bright, and whether she was a regular spy or just a peddler of bedroom confidences is a matter of doubt. Still—with reservations—Mata was precisely the sort of hussy writers like to write about and readers accept with enthusiasm. If there were not a clear record of her life and death, one might easily imagine her to have been invented by Mr. Oppenheim.

I have no quarrel with incredible romance; nor, of course, have you. When it is well done, we both adore it. It is an author's first duty to be entertaining, and in the case of a spy story possibly that is also his last duty. But I should just like to remark that many of the best spy stories have been founded on fact, perhaps all the best ones. The two best stories in this book, in my opinion, those by Mr. Maugham and Mr. White, are quite certainly true stories. Whether or not they ever happened, they have the quality and finality of life, the unmistakable accents of truth.

On the whole, this is a particularly good collection, I think. Nearly every kind of spy is celebrated here and each story is, I think, excellent of its kind.

It is a little curious perhaps that we do not remember the spies of fiction by their names, as we do the detectives and rogues. There is no outstanding figure in the field who may be compared with Sherlock

Holmes or Father Brown, for example; with Raffles or Arsène Lupin. Yet, as I come to think of it, there are very few of the conspicuous martial figures of fiction who have not, at one time or another, practiced the game of espionage. Athos, Comte de la Fère, for instance, was no spy in any opprobrious sense; but what of his behavior at the inn near La Rochelle? You will remember how, from his place of concealment, he overheard the conversation between Miladi and Cardinal Richelieu which enabled him to send the futile warning to the Duke of Buckingham. And how about d'Artagnan; eavesdropping to discover the meaning of the seventeenth century mousetrap in the house of Bonacieux? As a matter of fact, all four of the musketeers were playing the rôles of spies when they joined the forces of Colonel Harrison conveying King Charles to London, in the hope of effecting a rescue. Dumas's musketeers have Polish counterparts in the novels of Henryk Sienkiewicz, in *Fire and Sword* and *The Deluge* and *Pan Michael*; and Zagloba is perhaps the master spy of them all.

Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* boasts a spy in the best modern tradition, in the person of Father Holt, agent of a vast secret organization placed in England for the purpose of bringing about a Stuart restoration. Toward the end of the book, the plot engineered by Esmond—which failed because the Prince rode away in pursuit of Beatrix—is accompanied by a huge network of secret planning. The foundations of the scheme were laid in that ingenious cipher letter from Paris, you will remember; and if you don't remember, by all means look it up. What a tale of mystery and melodrama the great novelist might have given us if the notion had happened to strike him!

One of the most finished portraits of a spy in fiction is that of Goliath in Zola's *La Débâcle*. Goliath was one of the invisible army builded by Wilhelm Stieber, founder of Bismarck's superb espionage service; one of the Germans planted in northern France in preparation for the invasion of 1870. In that army he was of the lowest rank. His mission was not to draw plans of fortifications in the guise of innocent landscapes. As a field hand, he worked silently and effectively among French peasants and dairymaids, cunningly observant of roads and resources, and disappeared with the outbreak of war, to come back as a guide to the advance lines of von Moltke's army. In general, however perilous his position, the conventional spy of fiction is extricated at the last moment; that is the way editors and publishers prefer it. Goliath is an exception. Although no punk, he paid the penalty of his calling, dying a terrible and lingering death at the hands of the *francs-tireurs*.

Conan Doyle's dashing Col. Etienne Gerard, one recalls, was frequently a spy and made no bones about it. It was under the robe of a monk that he made his way into Saragossa and lighted the fuse that exploded the mine that breached the walls and enabled the French to

enter the city. And, although wearing his own uniform, it was as a spy behind the British lines in Portugal that he participated in the most remarkable fox hunt of fiction. Who that has read *The Crime of the Brigadier* can forget the prodigious feat that made him—in England—the most abhorred and outcast officer in the French service?

The exploits of Sherlock Holmes as a secret agent are well known; the record of them, admirably set forth by grand old A. Conan Watson, may be found in the book called *His Last Bow*. In the present volume, I have preferred to reprint the story called *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, in which the immortal fathomer is seen in his more familiar rôle of detective. However, there are spies in the story, several of them: watch Sherlock smoke them out!

If in any of the foregoing remarks I have suggested that fictional intrigue and fictional adventure is too fantastic, too unrelated to life, I shall now ask pardon. The fact is, of course, anything can happen in life and nearly everything has happened. Truth is always stranger than fiction and sometimes it is far less plausible than fiction. Just the other morning I read this astonishing dispatch from Berlin (via neutral sources) in a newspaper:

“An English commando obtained admission into the home of a Nazi General in Northern Italy by having himself delivered in a florist’s box. The delivery ‘boy’ was another commando. They made off with secret plans.”

If I had read that in a spy story in a fiction magazine, I would have sneered. If Mr. Oppenheim had read it in a newspaper, he would have discarded it as too implausible to be saved for fictional use. Of course it may be fiction, at that; one doesn’t believe everything one reads in the newspapers. But you know those commandos. I wouldn’t put it past them.

I have said little of the actual spies, great and small, who have flourished or failed to flourish along the years; and now there is no time. For those who may care to read about them a good book has been written; it is *The Story of Secret Service*, by Richard Wilmer Rowan, published no longer ago than 1937. They are all in Mr. Rowan’s pages—nearly all—from Akbar to Zubatov, alphabetically speaking; and they are a fascinating company.

For rapid, intelligent, and generous assistance in preparing this anthology of spy stories, I have to thank many persons; in particular Robert Sherman of The World Publishing Company’s editorial staff, Ellery Queen, James Sandoe, August Derleth, W. O. Fowler, and the very knowledgeable Junius B. Wood of Military Intelligence.

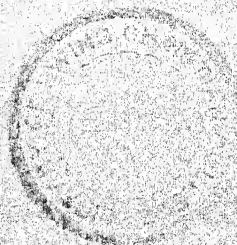
VINCENT STARRETT

WORLD'S GREAT SPY STORIES

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

It is, of course, unnecessary to introduce Mr. Somerset Maugham to readers anywhere in the English-speaking world. He is perhaps the most important novelist now practising his profession; his masterpiece, *Of Human Bondage*, is one of the great books of our time. His short stories are widely read, and one of them—*Rain*—is even better known as a play. A mighty traveller, Mr. Maugham has ranged the world in search of material for his unsentimental stories and novels and sketches; he writes with equal certainty and vigor whether his characters are Asiatic or European. During World War I he was a member of the British secret service, and a notable volume of experience—written as fiction—was the result of that assignment. It is from that volume, *Ashenden, or The British Agent*, that the present story is taken. If we may be sure of anything in literature, I think we may be sure that the spies in *The Traitor* were not invented. They lived and schemed and died just as we see them live and scheme and die in Mr. Maugham's profoundly moving pages.

THE TRAITOR



WHEN ASHENDEN, given charge of a number of spies working from Switzerland, was first sent there, R., wishing him to see the sort of reports that he would be required to obtain, handed him the communications, a sheaf of typewritten documents, of a man known in the secret service as Gustav.

"He's the best fellow we've got," said R. "His information is always very full and circumstantial. I want you to give his reports your very best attention. Of course Gustav is a clever little chap, but there's no reason why we shouldn't get just as good reports from the other agents. It's merely a question of explaining exactly what we want."

Gustav, who lived at Basle, represented a Swiss firm with branches at Frankfort, Mannheim and Cologne, and by virtue of his business was able to go in and out of Germany without risk. He travelled up and down the Rhine, and gathered material about the movement of troops, the manufacture of munitions, the state of mind of the country (a point on which R. laid stress) and other matters upon which the Allies desired information. His frequent letters to his wife hid an ingenious

code and the moment she received them in Basle she sent them to Ashenden in Geneva, who extracted from them the important facts and communicated these in the proper quarter. Every two months Gustav came home and prepared one of the reports that served as models to the other spies in this particular section of the secret service.

His employers were pleased with Gustav and Gustav had reason to be pleased with his employers. His services were so useful that he was not only paid more highly than the others but for particular scoops had received from time to time a handsome bonus.

This went on for more than a year. Then something aroused R.'s quick suspicions: he was a man of an amazing alertness, not so much of mind, as of instinct, and he had suddenly a feeling that some hankey-pankey was going on. He said nothing definite to Ashenden (whatever R. surmised he was disposed to keep to himself) but told him to go to Basle, Gustav being then in Germany, and have a talk with Gustav's wife. He left it to Ashenden to decide the tenor of the conversation.

Having arrived at Basle, and leaving his bag at the station, for he did not yet know whether he would have to stay or not, he took a tram to the corner of the street in which Gustav lived, and with a quick look to see that he was not followed, walked along to the house he sought. It was a block of flats that gave you the impression of decent poverty and Ashenden conjectured that they were inhabited by clerks and small tradespeople. Just inside the door was a cobbler's shop and Ashenden stopped.

"Does Herr Grabow live here?" he asked in his none too fluent German.

"Yes, I saw him go up a few minutes ago. You'll find him in."

Ashenden was startled, for he had but the day before received through Gustav's wife a letter addressed from Mannheim in which Gustav by means of his code gave the numbers of certain regiments that had just crossed the Rhine. Ashenden thought it unwise to ask the cobbler the question that rose to his lips, so thanked him and went up to the third floor on which he knew already that Gustav lived. He rang the bell and heard it tinkle within. In a moment the door was opened by a dapper little man with a close-shaven round head and spectacles. He wore carpet slippers.

"Herr Grabow?" asked Ashenden.

"At your service," said Gustav.

"May I come in?"

Gustav was standing with his back to the light and Ashenden could not see the look on his face. He felt a momentary hesitation and gave the name under which he received Gustav's letters from Germany.

"Come in, come in. I am very glad to see you."

Gustav led the way into a stuffy little room, heavy with carved oak furniture, and on the large table covered with a tablecloth of green velveteen was a typewriter. Gustav was apparently engaged in composing one of his invaluable reports. A woman was sitting at the open window darning socks, but at a word from Gustav rose, gathered up her things and left. Ashenden had disturbed a pretty picture of connubial bliss.

"Sit down, please. How very fortunate that I was in Basle! I have long wanted to make your acquaintance. I have only just this minute returned from Germany." He pointed to the sheets of paper by the typewriter. "I think you will be pleased with the news I bring. I have some very valuable information." He chuckled. "One is never sorry to earn a bonus."

He was very cordial, but to Ashenden his cordiality rang false. Gustav kept his eyes, smiling behind the glasses, fixed watchfully on Ashenden and it was possible that they held a trace of nervousness.

"You must have travelled quickly to get here only a few hours after your letter, sent here and then sent on by your wife, reached me in Geneva."

"That is very probable. One of the things I had to tell you is that the Germans suspect that information is getting through by means of commercial letters and so they have decided to hold up all mail at the frontier for eight and forty hours."

"I see," said Ashenden amiably. "And was it on that account that you took the precaution of dating your letter forty-eight hours after you sent it?"

"Did I do that? That was very stupid of me. I must have mistaken the day of the month."

Ashenden looked at Gustav with a smile. That was very thin; Gustav, a business man, knew too well how important in his particular job was the exactness of a date. The circuitous routes by which it was necessary to get information from Germany made it difficult to transmit news quickly and it was essential to know precisely on what days certain events had taken place.

"Let me look at your passport a minute," said Ashenden.

"What do you want with my passport?"

"I want to see when you went into Germany and when you came out."

"But you do not imagine that my comings and goings are marked on my passport? I have methods of crossing the frontier."

Ashenden knew a good deal of this matter. He knew that both the Germans and the Swiss guarded the frontier with severity.

"Oh? Why should you not cross in the ordinary way? You were engaged because your connection with a Swiss firm supplying necessary

goods to Germany made it easy for you to travel backwards and forwards without suspicion. I can understand that you might get past the German sentries with the connivance of the Germans, but what about the Swiss?"

Gustav assumed a look of indignation.

"I do not understand you. Do you mean to suggest that I am in the service of the Germans? I give you my word of honour . . . I will not allow my straightforwardness to be impugned."

"You would not be the only one to take money from both sides and provide information of value to neither."

"Do you pretend that my information is of no value? Why then have you given me more bonuses than any other agent has received? The Colonel has repeatedly expressed the highest satisfaction with my services."

It was Ashenden's turn now to be cordial.

"Come, come, my dear fellow, do not try to ride the high horse. You do not wish to show me your passport and I will not insist. You are not under the impression that we leave the statements of our agents without corroboration or that we are so foolish as not to keep track of their movements? Even the best of jokes cannot bear an indefinite repetition. I am in peace-time a humorist by profession and I tell you that from bitter experience." Now Ashenden thought the moment had arrived to attempt his bluff; he knew something of the excellent but difficult game of poker. "We have information that you have not been to Germany now, nor since you were engaged by us, but have sat here quietly in Basle, and all your reports are merely due to your fertile imagination."

Gustav looked at Ashenden and saw a face expressive of nothing but tolerance and good humour. A smile slowly broke on his lips and he gave his shoulders a little shrug.

"Did you think I was such a fool as to risk my life for fifty pounds a month? I love my wife."

Ashenden laughed outright.

"I congratulate you. It is not everyone who can flatter himself that he has made a fool of our secret service for a year."

"I had the chance of earning money without any difficulty. My firm stopped sending me into Germany at the beginning of the war, but I learned what I could from the other travellers, I kept my ears open in restaurants and beer-cellars, and I read the German papers. I got a lot of amusement out of sending you reports and letters."

"I don't wonder," said Ashenden.

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing. What can we do? You are not under the impression that we shall continue to pay you a salary?"

"No, I cannot expect that."

"By the way, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask if you have been playing the same game with the Germans?"

"Oh, no," Gustav cried vehemently. "How can you think it? My sympathies are absolutely pro-ally. My heart is entirely with you."

"Well, why not?" asked Ashenden. "The Germans have all the money in the world and there is no reason why you should not get some of it. We could give you information from time to time that the Germans would be prepared to pay for."

Gustav drummed his fingers on the table. He took up a sheet of the now useless report.

"The Germans are dangerous people to meddle with."

"You are a very intelligent man. And after all, even if your salary is stopped, you can always earn a bonus by bringing us news that can be useful to us. But it will have to be substantiated; in future we pay only by results."

"I will think of it."

For a moment or two Ashenden left Gustav to his reflections. He lit a cigarette and watched the smoke he had inhaled fade into the air. He thought too.

"Is there anything particular you want to know?" asked Gustav suddenly.

Ashenden smiled.

"It would be worth a couple of thousand Swiss francs to you if you could tell me what the Germans are doing with a spy of theirs in Lucerne. He is an Englishman and his name is Grantley Caypor."

"I have heard the name," said Gustav. He paused a moment. "How long are you staying here?"

"As long as necessary. I will take a room at the hotel and let you know the number. If you have anything to say to me you can be sure of finding me in my room at nine every morning and at seven every night."

"I should not risk coming to the hotel. But I can write."

"Very well."

Ashenden rose to go and Gustav accompanied him to the door.

"We part without ill-feeling then?" he asked.

"Of course. Your reports will remain in our archives as models of what a report should be."

Ashenden spent two or three days visiting Basle. It did not much amuse him. He passed a good deal of time in the bookshops turning over the pages of books that would have been worth reading if life were a thousand years long. Once he saw Gustav in the street. On the fourth morning a letter was brought up with his coffee. The envelope was that of a commercial firm unknown to him and inside it was a type-

written sheet. There was no address and no signature. Ashenden wondered if Gustav was aware that a typewriter could betray its owner as certainly as a handwriting. Having twice carefully read the letter, he held the paper up to the light to see the watermark, (he had no reason for doing this except that the sleuths of detective novels always did it), then struck a match and watched it burn. He scrunched up the charred fragments in his hand.

He got up, for he had taken advantage of his situation to breakfast in bed; packed his bag and took the next train to Berne. From there he was able to send a code telegram to R. His instructions were given to him verbally two days later, in the bedroom of his hotel at an hour when no one was likely to be seen walking along a corridor, and within twenty-four hours, though by a circuitous route, he arrived at Lucerne.

Having taken a room at the hotel at which he had been instructed to stay Ashenden went out; it was a lovely day, early in August, and the sun shone in an unclouded sky. He had not been to Lucerne since he was a boy and but vaguely remembered a covered bridge, a great stone lion and a church in which he had sat, bored yet impressed, while they played an organ; and now wandering along a shady quay (and the lake looked just as tawdry and unreal as it looked on the picture-postcards) he tried not so much to find his way about a half-forgotten scene as to reform in his mind some recollection of the shy and eager lad, so impatient for life (which he saw not in the present of his adolescence but only in the future of his manhood), who so long ago had wandered there. But it seemed to him that the most vivid of his memories was not of himself, but of the crowd; he seemed to remember sun and heat and people; the train was crowded and so was the hotel, the lake steamers were packed and on the quays and in the streets you threaded your way among the throng of holiday makers. They were fat and old and ugly and odd, and they stank. Now, in wartime, Lucerne was as deserted as it must have been before the world at large discovered that Switzerland was the playground of Europe. Most of the hotels were closed, the streets were empty, the rowing boats for hire rocked idly at the water's edge and there was none to take them, and in the avenues by the lake the only persons to be seen were serious Swiss taking their neutrality, like a dachshund, for a walk with them. Ashenden felt exhilarated by the solitude, and sitting down on a bench that faced the water surrendered himself deliberately to the sensation. It was true that the lake was absurd, the water was too blue, the mountains too snowy, and its beauty, hitting you in the face, exasperated rather than thrilled; but all the same there was something pleasing in the prospect, an artless candour, like one of Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*, that made Ashenden smile with complacency. Lucerne reminded him of wax

flowers under glass cases and cuckoo clocks and fancy work in Berlin wool. So long at all events as the fine weather lasted he was prepared to enjoy himself. He did not see why he should not at least try to combine pleasure to himself with profit to his country. He was travelling with a brand-new passport in his pocket, under a borrowed name, and this gave him an agreeable sense of owning a new personality. He was often slightly tired of himself, and it diverted him for a while to be merely a creature of R.'s facile invention. The experience he had just enjoyed appealed to his acute sense of the absurd. R., it is true, had not seen the fun of it: what humour R. possessed was of a sardonic turn and he had no facility for taking in good part a joke at his own expense. To do that you must be able to look at yourself from the outside and be at the same time spectator and actor in the pleasant comedy of life. R. was a soldier and regarded introspection as unhealthy, unenglish and unpatriotic.

Ashenden got up and strolled slowly to his hotel. It was a small German hotel, of the second class, spotlessly clean, and his bedroom had a nice view; it was furnished with brightly varnished pitch-pine, and though on a cold wet day it would have been wretched, in that warm and sunny weather it was gay and pleasing. There were tables in the hall and he sat down at one of these and ordered a bottle of beer. The landlady was curious to know why in that dead season he had come to stay and he was glad to satisfy her curiosity. He told her that he had recently recovered from an attack of typhoid and had come to Lucerne to get back his strength. He was employed in the Censorship Department and was taking the opportunity to brush up his rusty German. He asked her if she could recommend to him a German teacher. The landlady was a blond and blowsy Swiss, good-humoured and talkative, so that Ashenden felt pretty sure that she would repeat in the proper quarter the information he gave her. It was his turn now to ask a few questions. She was voluble on the subject of the war on account of which the hotel, in that month so full that rooms had to be found for visitors in neighbouring houses, was nearly empty. A few people came in from outside to eat their meals *en pension*, but she had only two lots of resident guests. One was an old Irish couple who lived in Vevey and passed their summers in Lucerne and the other was an Englishman and his wife. She was a German and they were obliged on that account to live in a neutral country. Ashenden took care to show little curiosity about them—he recognized in the description Grantley Caypor—but of her own accord she told him that they spent most of the day walking about the mountains. Herr Caypor was a botanist and much interested in the flora of the country. His lady was a very nice woman and she felt her position keenly. Ah, well, the war could not last for ever. The landlady bustled away and Ashenden went upstairs.

Dinner was at seven, and, wishing to be in the dining-room before anyone else so that he could take stock of his fellow-guests as they entered, he went down as soon as he heard the bell. It was a very plain, stiff, whitewashed room, with chairs of the same shiny pitch-pine as in his bedroom, and on the walls were oleographs of Swiss lakes. On each little table was a bunch of flowers. It was all neat and clean and presaged a bad dinner. Ashenden would have liked to make up for it by ordering a bottle of the best Rhine-wine to be found in the hotel, but did not venture to draw attention to himself by extravagance (he saw on two or three tables half-empty bottles of table hock, which made him surmise that his fellow-guests drank thriftily), and so contented himself with ordering a pint of lager. Presently one or two persons came in, single men with some occupation in Lucerne and obviously Swiss, and sat down each at his own little table and untied the napkins that at the end of luncheon they had neatly tied up. They propped newspapers against their water-jugs and read while they somewhat noisily ate their soup. Then entered a very old tall bent man, with white hair and a drooping white moustache, accompanied by a little old white-haired lady in black. These were certainly the Irish colonel and his wife of whom the landlady had spoken. They took their seats and the colonel poured out a thimbleful of wine for his wife and a thimbleful for himself. They waited in silence for their dinner to be served to them by the buxom, hearty maid.

At last the persons arrived for whom Ashenden had been waiting. He was doing his best to read a German book and it was only by an exercise of self-control that he allowed himself only for one instant to raise his eyes as they came in. His glance showed him a man of about forty-five with short dark hair, somewhat grizzled, of middle height, but corpulent, with a broad red clean-shaven face. He wore a shirt open at the neck, with a wide collar, and a grey suit. He walked ahead of his wife, and of her Ashenden only caught the impression of a German woman self-effaced and dusty. Grantley Caypor sat down and began in a loud voice explaining to the waitress that they had taken an immense walk. They had been up some mountain the name of which meant nothing to Ashenden but which excited in the maid expressions of astonishment and enthusiasm. Then Caypor, still in fluent German but with a marked English accent, said that they were so late they had not even gone up to wash, but had just rinsed their hands outside. He had a resonant voice and a jovial manner.

"Serve me quick, we're starving with hunger, and bring beer, bring three bottles. *Lieber Gott*, what a thirst I have!"

He seemed to be a man of exuberant vitality. He brought into that dull, overclean dining-room the breath of life and everyone in it appeared on a sudden more alert. He began to talk to his wife, in English,

and everything he said could be heard by all; but presently she interrupted him with a remark made in an undertone. Caypor stopped and Ashenden felt that his eyes were turned in his direction. Mrs. Caypor had noticed the arrival of a stranger and had drawn her husband's attention to it. Ashenden turned the page of the book he was pretending to read, but he felt that Caypor's gaze was fixed intently upon him. When he addressed his wife again it was in so low a tone that Ashenden could not even tell what language he used, but when the maid brought them their soup Caypor, his voice still low, asked her a question. It was plain that he was enquiring who Ashenden was. Ashenden could catch of the maid's reply but the one word *länder*.

One or two people finished their dinner and went out picking their teeth. The old Irish colonel and his old wife rose from their table and he stood aside to let her pass. They had eaten their meal without exchanging a word. She walked slowly to the door; but the colonel stopped to say a word to a Swiss who might have been a local attorney, and when she reached it she stood there, bowed and with a sheep-like look, patiently waiting for her husband to come and open it for her. Ashenden realized that she had never opened a door for herself. She did not know how to. In a minute the colonel with his old, old gait came to the door and opened it; she passed out and he followed. The little incident offered a key to their whole lives, and from it Ashenden began to reconstruct their histories, circumstances and characters; but he pulled himself up: he could not allow himself the luxury of creation. He finished his dinner.

When he went into the hall he saw tied to the leg of a table a bull-terrier and in passing mechanically put down his hand to fondle the dog's drooping, soft ears. The landlady was standing at the foot of the stairs.

"Whose is this lovely beast?" asked Ashenden.

"He belongs to Herr Caypor. Fritz, he is called. Herr Caypor says he has a longer pedigree than the King of England."

Fritz rubbed himself against Ashenden's leg and with his nose sought the palm of his hand. Ashenden went upstairs to fetch his hat, and when he came down saw Caypor standing at the entrance of the hotel talking with the landlady. From the sudden silence and their constrained manner he guessed that Caypor had been making enquiries about him. When he passed between them, into the street, out of the corner of his eye he saw Caypor give him a suspicious stare. That frank, jovial red face bore then a look of shifty cunning.

Ashenden strolled along till he found a tavern where he could have his coffee in the open and to compensate himself for the bottle of beer that his sense of duty had urged him to drink at dinner, ordered the best brandy the house provided. He was pleased at last to have come

face to face with the man of whom he had heard so much and in a day or two hoped to become acquainted with him. It is never very difficult to get to know anyone who has a dog. But he was in no hurry; he would let things take their course: with the object he had in view he could not afford to be hasty.

Ashenden reviewed the circumstances. Grantley Caypor was an Englishman, born according to his passport in Birmingham, and he was forty-two years of age. His wife, to whom he had been married for eleven years, was of German birth and parentage. That was public knowledge. Information about his antecedents was contained in a private document. He had started life, according to this, in a lawyer's office in Birmingham and then had drifted into journalism. He had been connected with an English paper in Cairo and with another in Shanghai. There he got into trouble for attempting to get money on false pretences and was sentenced to a short term of imprisonment. All trace of him was lost for two years after his release, when he reappeared in a shipping-office in Marseilles. From there, still in the shipping business, he went to Hamburg, where he married, and to London. In London he set up for himself, in the export business, but after some time failed and was made a bankrupt. He returned to journalism. At the outbreak of war he was once more in the shipping business and in August 1914 was living quietly with his German wife at Southampton. In the beginning of the following year he told his employers that owing to the nationality of his wife his position was intolerable; they had no fault to find with him and, recognizing that he was in an awkward fix, granted his request that he should be transferred to Genoa. Here he remained till Italy entered the war, but then gave notice and with his papers in perfect order crossed the border and took up his residence in Switzerland.

All this indicated a man of doubtful honesty and unsettled disposition, with no background and of no financial standing; but the facts were of no importance to anyone till it was discovered that Caypor, certainly from the beginning of the war and perhaps sooner, was in the service of the German Intelligence Department. He had a salary of forty pounds a month. But though dangerous and wily no steps would have been taken to deal with him if he had contented himself with transmitting such news as he was able to get in Switzerland. He could do no great harm there and it might even be possible to make use of him to convey information that it was desirable to let the enemy have. He had no notion that anything was known of him. His letters, and he received a good many, were closely censored; there were few codes that the people who dealt with such matters could not in the end decipher and it might be that sooner or later through him it would be possible to lay hands on the organization that still flourished in England. But then he did something that drew R.'s attention to him. Had he known it none

could have blamed him for shaking in his shoes: R. was not a very nice man to get on the wrong side of. Caypor scraped acquaintance in Zürich with a young Spaniard, Gomez by name, who had lately entered the British secret service, by his nationality inspired him with confidence, and managed to worm out of him the fact that he was engaged in espionage. Probably the Spaniard, with a very human desire to seem important, had done no more than talk mysteriously; but on Caypor's information he was watched when he went to Germany and one day caught just as he was posting a letter in a code that was eventually deciphered. He was tried, convicted and shot. It was bad enough to lose a useful and disinterested agent, but it entailed besides the changing of a safe and simple code. R. was not pleased. But R. was not the man to let any desire of revenge stand in the way of his main object and it occurred to him that if Caypor was merely betraying his country for money it might be possible to get him to take more money to betray his employers. The fact that he had succeeded in delivering into their hands an agent of the Allies must seem to them an earnest of his good faith. He might be very useful. But R. had no notion what kind of man Caypor was, he had lived his shabby, furtive life obscurely, and the only photograph that existed of him was one taken for a passport. Ashenden's instructions were to get acquainted with Caypor and see whether there was any chance that he would work honestly for the British: if he thought there was, he was entitled to sound him and if his suggestions were met with favour to make certain propositions. It was a task that needed tact and a knowledge of men. If on the other hand Ashenden came to the conclusion that Caypor could not be bought he was to watch and report his movements. The information he had obtained from Gustav was vague, but important; there was only one point in it that was interesting, and this was that the head of the German Intelligence Department in Berne was growing restive at Caypor's lack of activity. Caypor was asking for a higher salary and Major von P. had told him that he must earn it. It might be that he was urging him to go to England. If he could be induced to cross the frontier Ashenden's work was done.

"How the devil do you expect me to persuade him to put his head in a noose?" asked Ashenden.

"It won't be a noose, it'll be a firing squad," said R.

"Caypor's clever."

"Well, be cleverer, damn your eyes."

Ashenden made up his mind that he would take no steps to make Caypor's acquaintance, but allow the first advances to be made by him. If he was being pressed for results it must surely occur to him that it would be worth while to get into conversation with an Englishman who was employed in the Censorship Department. Ashenden was pre-

pared with a supply of information that it could not in the least benefit the Central Powers to possess. With a false name and a false passport he had little fear that Caypor would guess that he was a British agent.

Ashenden did not have to wait long. Next day he was sitting in the doorway of the hotel, drinking a cup of coffee and already half asleep after a substantial *mittagessen*, when the Caypors came out of the dining-room. Mrs. Caypor went upstairs and Caypor released his dog. The dog bounded along and in a friendly fashion leaped up against Ashenden.

"Come here, Fritz," cried Caypor, and then to Ashenden: "I'm so sorry. But he's quite gentle."

"Oh, that's all right. He won't hurt me."

Caypor stopped at the doorway.

"He's a bull-terrier. You don't often see them on the Continent." He seemed while he spoke to be taking Ashenden's measure; he called to the maid, "A coffee, please, *fräulein*. You've just arrived, haven't you?"

"Yes, I came yesterday."

"Really? I didn't see you in the dining-room last night. Are you making a stay?"

"I don't know. I've been ill and I've come here to recuperate."

The maid came with the coffee and seeing Caypor talking to Ashenden put the tray on the table at which he was sitting. Caypor gave a laugh of faint embarrassment.

"I don't want to force myself upon you. I don't know why the maid put my coffee on your table."

"Please sit down," said Ashenden.

"It's very good of you. I've lived so long on the Continent that I'm always forgetting that my countrymen are apt to look upon it as con-founded cheek if you talk to them. Are you English, by the way, or American?"

"English," said Ashenden.

Ashenden was by nature a very shy person, and he had in vain tried to cure himself of a failing that at his age was unseemly, but on occasion he knew how to make effective use of it. He explained now in a hesitating and awkward manner the facts that he had the day before told the landlady and that he was convinced she had already passed on to Caypor.

"You couldn't have come to a better place than Lucerne. It's an oasis of peace in this war-weary world. When you're here you might almost forget that there is such a thing as a war going on. That is why I've come here. I'm a journalist by profession."

"I couldn't help wondering if you wrote," said Ashenden, with an eager timid smile.

It was clear that he had not learnt that "oasis of peace in a war-weary world" at the shipping-office.

"You see, I married a German lady," said Caypor gravely.

"Oh, really?"

"I don't think anyone could be more patriotic than I am, I'm English through and through and I don't mind telling you that in my opinion the British Empire is the greatest instrument for good that the world has ever seen, but having a German wife I naturally see a good deal of the reverse of the medal. You don't have to tell me that the Germans have faults, but frankly I'm not prepared to admit that they're devils incarnate. At the beginning of the war my poor wife had a very rough time in England and I for one couldn't have blamed her if she'd felt rather bitter about it. Everyone thought she was a spy. It'll make you laugh when you know her. She's the typical German *hausfrau* who cares for nothing but her house and her husband and our only child Fritz." Caypor fondled his dog and gave a little laugh. "Yes, Fritz, you are our child, aren't you? Naturally it made my position very awkward, I was connected with some very important papers, and my editors weren't quite comfortable about it. Well, to cut a long story short I thought the most dignified course was to resign and come to a neutral country till the storm blew over. My wife and I never discuss the war, though I'm bound to tell you that it's more on my account than hers, she's much more tolerant than I am and she's more willing to look upon this terrible business from my point of view than I am from hers."

"That is strange," said Ashenden. "As a rule women are so much more rabid than men."

"My wife is a very remarkable person. I should like to introduce you to her. By the way, I don't know if you know my name. Grantley Caypor."

"My name is Somerville," said Ashenden.

He told him then of the work he had been doing in the Censorship Department, and he fancied that into Caypor's eyes came a certain intentness. Presently he told him that he was looking for someone to give him conversation-lessons in German so that he might rub up his rusty knowledge of the language; and as he spoke a notion flashed across his mind: he gave Caypor a look and saw that the same notion had come to him. It had occurred to them at the same instant that it would be a very good plan for Ashenden's teacher to be Mrs. Caypor.

"I asked our landlady if she could find me someone and she said she thought she could. I must ask her again. It ought not to be very hard to find a man who is prepared to come and talk German to me for an hour a day."

"I wouldn't take anyone on the landlady's recommendation," said Caypor. "After all you want someone with a good north-German accent and she only talks Swiss. I'll ask my wife if she knows anyone. My wife's

a very highly educated woman and you could trust her recommendation."

"That's very kind of you."

- Ashenden observed Grantley Caypor at his ease. He noticed how the small, grey-green eyes, which last night he had not been able to see, contradicted the red good-humoured frankness of the face. They were quick and shifty, but when the mind behind them was seized by an unexpected notion they were suddenly still. It gave one a peculiar feeling of the working of the brain. They were not eyes that inspired confidence; Caypor did that with his jolly, good-natured smile, the openness of his broad, weather-beaten face, his comfortable obesity and the cheeriness of his loud, deep voice. He was doing his best now to be agreeable. While Ashenden talked to him, a little shyly still but gaining confidence from that breezy, cordial manner, capable of putting anyone at his ease, it intrigued him to remember that the man was a common spy. It gave a tang to his conversation to reflect that he had been ready to sell his country for no more than forty pounds a month. Ashenden had known Gomez, the young Spaniard whom Caypor had betrayed. He was a high-spirited youth, with a love of adventure, and he had undertaken his dangerous mission not for the money he earned by it, but from a passion for romance. It amused him to outwit the clumsy German and it appealed to his sense of the absurd to play a part in a shilling shocker. It was not very nice to think of him now six feet underground in a prison yard. He was young and he had a certain grace of gesture. Ashenden wondered whether Caypor had felt a qualm when he delivered him up to destruction.

"I suppose you know a little German?" asked Caypor, interested in the stranger.

"Oh, yes, I was a student in Germany, and I used to talk it fluently, but that is long ago and I have forgotten. I can still read it very comfortably."

"Oh, yes, I noticed you were reading a German book last night."

Fool! It was only a little while since he had told Ashenden that he had not seen him at dinner. He wondered whether Caypor had observed the slip. How difficult it was never to make one! Ashenden must be on his guard; the thing that made him most nervous was the thought that he might not answer readily enough to his assumed name of Somerville. Of course there was always the chance that Caypor had made the slip on purpose to see by Ashenden's face whether he noticed anything. Caypor got up.

"There is my wife. We go for a walk up one of the mountains every afternoon. I can tell you some charming walks. The flowers even now are lovely."

"I'm afraid I must wait till I'm a bit stronger," said Ashenden, with a little sigh.

He had naturally a pale face and never looked as robust as he was. Mrs. Caypor came downstairs and her husband joined her. They walked down the road, Fritz bounding round them, and Ashenden saw that Caypor immediately began to speak with volubility. He was evidently telling his wife the results of his interview with Ashenden. Ashenden looked at the sun shining so gaily on the lake; the shadow of a breeze fluttered the green leaves of the trees; everything invited to a stroll: he got up, went to his room and throwing himself on his bed had a very pleasant sleep.

He went into dinner that evening as the Caypors were finishing, for he had wandered melancholy about Lucerne in the hope of finding a cocktail that would enable him to face the potato salad that he foresaw, and on their way out of the dining-room Caypor stopped and asked him if he would drink coffee with them. When Ashenden joined them in the hall Caypor got up and introduced him to his wife. She bowed stiffly and no answering smile came to her face to respond to Ashenden's civil greeting. It was not hard to see that her attitude was definitely hostile. It put Ashenden at his ease. She was a plainish woman, nearing forty, with a muddy skin and vague features; her drab hair was arranged in a plait round her head like that of Napoleon's Queen of Prussia; and she was squarely built, plump rather than fat, and solid. But she did not look stupid; she looked on the contrary a woman of character and Ashenden, who had lived enough in Germany to recognize the type, was ready to believe that though capable of doing the housework, cooking the dinner and climbing a mountain, she might be also prodigiously well-informed. She wore a white blouse that showed a sunburned neck, a black skirt and heavy walking boots. Caypor addressing her in English told her in his jovial way, as though she did not know it already, what Ashenden had told him about himself. She listened grimly.

"I think you told me you understood German," said Caypor, his big red face wreathed in polite smiles but his little eyes darting about restlessly.

"Yes, I was for some time a student in Heidelberg."

"Really?" said Mrs. Caypor in English, an expression of faint interest for a moment chasing away the sullenness from her face. "I know Heidelberg very well. I was at school there for one year."

Her English was correct, but throaty, and the mouthing emphasis she gave her words was disagreeable. Ashenden was diffuse in praise of the old university town and the beauty of the neighbourhood. She heard him, from the standpoint of her Teutonic superiority, with toleration rather than with enthusiasm.

"It is well known that the valley of the Neckar is one of the beauty places of the whole world," she said.

"I have not told you, my dear," said Caypor then, "that Mr. Somerville is looking for someone to give him conversation lessons while he is here. I told him that perhaps you could suggest a teacher."

"No, I know no one whom I could conscientiously recommend," she answered. "The Swiss accent is hateful beyond words. It could do Mr. Somerville only harm to converse with a Swiss."

"If I were in your place, Mr. Somerville, I would try and persuade my wife to give you lessons. She is, if I may say so, a very cultivated and highly educated woman."

"Ach, Grantley, I have not the time. I have my own work to do."

Ashenden saw that he was being given his opportunity. The trap was prepared and all he had to do was fall in. He turned to Mrs. Caypor with a manner that he tried to make shy, deprecating and modest.

"Of course it would be too wonderful if you would give me lessons. I should look upon it as a real privilege. Naturally I wouldn't want to interfere with your work, I am just here to get well, with nothing in the world to do, and I would suit my time entirely to your convenience."

He felt a flash of satisfaction pass from one to the other and in Mrs. Caypor's blue eyes he fancied that he saw a dark glow.

"Of course it would be a purely business arrangement," said Caypor. "There's no reason that my good wife shouldn't earn a little pin-money. Would you think ten francs an hour too much?"

"No," said Ashenden, "I should think myself lucky to get a first-rate teacher for that."

"What do you say, my dear? Surely you can spare an hour, and you would be doing this gentleman a kindness. He would learn that all Germans are not the devilish fiends that they think them in England."

On Mrs. Caypor's brow was an uneasy frown and Ashenden could not but think with apprehension of that hour's conversation a day that he was going to exchange with her. Heaven only knew how he would have to rack his brain for subjects of discourse with that heavy and morose woman. Now she made a visible effort.

"I shall be very pleased to give Mr. Somerville conversation lessons."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Somerville," said Caypor noisily. "You're in for a treat. When will you start, to-morrow at eleven?"

"That would suit me very well if it suits Mrs. Caypor."

"Yes, that is as good an hour as another," she answered.

Ashenden left them to discuss the happy outcome of their diplomacy. But when, punctually at eleven next morning, he heard a knock at his door (for it had been arranged that Mrs. Caypor should give him his lesson in his room) it was not without trepidation that he opened it. It behooved him to be frank, a trifle indiscreet, but obviously wary of a

German woman, sufficiently intelligent, and impulsive. Mrs. Caypor's face was dark and sulky. She plainly hated having anything to do with him. But they sat down and she began, somewhat peremptorily, to ask him questions about his knowledge of German literature. She corrected his mistakes with exactness and when he put before her some difficulty in German construction explained it with clearness and precision. It was obvious that though she hated giving him a lesson she meant to give it conscientiously. She seemed to have not only an aptitude for teaching, but a love of it, and as the hour went on she began to speak with greater earnestness. It was already only by an effort that she remembered that he was a brutal Englishman. Ashenden, noticing the unconscious struggle within her, found himself not a little entertained; and it was with truth that, when later in the day Caypor asked him how the lesson had gone, he answered that it was highly satisfactory; Mrs. Caypor was an excellent teacher and a most interesting person.

"I told you so. She's the most remarkable woman I know."

And Ashenden had a feeling that when in his hearty, laughing way Caypor said this he was for the first time entirely sincere.

In a day or two Ashenden guessed that Mrs. Caypor was giving him lessons only in order to enable Caypor to arrive at a closer intimacy with him, for she confined herself strictly to matters of literature, music and painting; and when Ashenden, by way of experiment, brought the conversation round to the war, she cut him short.

"I think that is a topic that we had better avoid, Herr Somerville," she said.

She continued to give her lessons with the greatest thoroughness, and he had his money's worth, but every day she came with the same sullen face and it was only in the interest of teaching that she lost for a moment her instinctive dislike of him. Ashenden exercised in turn, but in vain, all his wiles. He was ingratiating, ingenious, humble, grateful, flattering, simple and timid. She remained coldly hostile. She was a fanatic. Her patriotism was aggressive, but disinterested, and obsessed with the notion of the superiority of all things German she loathed England with a virulent hatred because in that country she saw the chief obstacle to their diffusion. Her ideal was a German world in which the rest of the nations under a hegemony greater than that of Rome should enjoy the benefits of German science and German art and German culture. There was in the conception a magnificent impudence that appealed to Ashenden's sense of humour. She was no fool. She had read much, in several languages, and she could talk of the books she had read with good sense. She had a knowledge of modern painting and modern music that not a little impressed Ashenden. It was amusing once to hear her before luncheon play one of those silvery little pieces of Debussy; she played it disdainfully because it was

French and so light, but with an angry appreciation of its grace and gaiety. When Ashenden congratulated her she shrugged her shoulders.

"The decadent music of a decadent nation," she said. Then with powerful hands she struck the first resounding chords of a sonata by Beethoven; but she stopped. "I cannot play, I am out of practice, and you English, what do you know of music? You have not produced a composer since Purcell!"

"What do you think of that statement?" Ashenden, smiling, asked Caypor who was standing near.

"I confess its truth. The little I know of music my wife taught me. I wish you could hear her play when she is in practice." He put his fat hand, with its square, stumpy fingers, on her shoulder. "She can wring your heartstrings with pure beauty."

"Dummer Kerl," she said, in a soft voice. "Stupid fellow," and Ashenden saw her mouth for a moment quiver, but she quickly recovered. "You English, you cannot paint, you cannot model, you cannot write music."

"Some of us can at times write pleasing verses," said Ashenden, with good humour, for it was not his business to be put out, and, he did not know why, two lines occurring to him he said them:

*"Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West."*

"Yes," said Mrs. Caypor, with a strange gesture, "you can write poetry. I wonder why."

And to Ashenden's surprise she went on, in her guttural English, to recite the next two lines of the poem he had quoted.

"Come, Grantley, *mittagessen* is ready, let us go into the dining-room." They left Ashenden reflective.

Ashenden admired goodness, but was not outraged by wickedness. People sometimes thought him heartless because he was more often interested in others than attached to them, and even in the few to whom he was attached his eyes saw with equal clearness the merits and the defects. When he liked people it was not because he was blind to their faults, he did not mind their faults but accepted them with a tolerant shrug of the shoulders, or because he ascribed to them excellencies that they did not possess; and since he judged his friends with candour they never disappointed him and so he seldom lost one. He asked from none more than he could give. He was able to pursue his study of the Caypors without prejudice and without passion. Mrs. Caypor seemed to him more of a piece and therefore the easier of the two to understand; she obviously detested him, though it was so necessary for her to be civil to him her antipathy was strong enough to wring from her now

and then an expression of rudeness; and had she been safely able to do so she would have killed him without a qualm. But in the pressure of Caypor's chubby hand on his wife's shoulder and in the fugitive trembling of her lips Ashenden had divined that this unprepossessing woman and that mean fat man were joined together by a deep and sincere love. It was touching. Ashenden assembled the observations that he had been making for the past few days and little things that he had noticed but to which he had attached no significance returned to him. It seemed to him that Mrs. Caypor loved her husband because she was of a stronger character than he and because she felt his dependence on her; she loved him for his admiration of her, and you might guess that till she met him this dumpy, plain woman with her dullness, good sense and want of humour could not have much enjoyed the admiration of men; she enjoyed his heartiness and his noisy jokes, and his high spirits stirred her sluggish blood; he was a great big bouncing boy and he would never be anything else and she felt like a mother towards him; she had made him what he was, and he was her man and she was his woman, and she loved him, notwithstanding his weakness (for with her clear head she must always have been conscious of that), she loved him, *ach*, was, as Isolde loved Tristan. But then there was the espionage. Even Ashenden with all his tolerance for human frailty could not but feel that to betray your country for money is not a very pretty proceeding. Of course she knew of it, indeed it was probably through her that Caypor had first been approached; he would never have undertaken such work if she had not urged him to it. She loved him and she was an honest and an upright woman. By what devious means had she persuaded herself to force her husband to adopt so base and dishonourable a calling? Ashenden lost himself in a labyrinth of conjecture as he tried to piece together the actions of her mind.

Grantley Caypor was another story. There was little to admire in him, but at that moment Ashenden was not looking for an object of admiration; but there was much that was singular and much that was unexpected in that gross and vulgar fellow. Ashenden watched with entertainment the suave manner in which the spy tried to inveigle him in his toils. It was a couple of days after his first lesson that Caypor after dinner, his wife having gone upstairs, threw himself heavily into a chair by Ashenden's side. His faithful Fritz came up to him and put his long muzzle with its black nose on his knee.

"He has no brain," said Caypor, "but a heart of gold. Look at those little pink eyes. Did you ever see anything so stupid? And what an ugly face, but what incredible charm!"

"Have you had him long?" asked Ashenden.

"I got him in 1914 just before the outbreak of war. By the way, what do you think of the news to-day? Of course my wife and I never discuss

the war. You can't think what a relief to me it is to find a fellow-countryman to whom I can open my heart."

He handed Ashenden a cheap Swiss cigar and Ashenden, making a rueful sacrifice to duty, accepted it.

"Of course they haven't got a chance, the Germans," said Caypor, "not a dog's change. I knew they were beaten the moment we came in."

His manner was earnest, sincere and confidential. Ashenden made a commonplace rejoinder.

"It's the greatest grief of my life that owing to my wife's nationality I was unable to do any war work. I tried to enlist the day war broke out, but they wouldn't have me on account of my age, but I don't mind telling you, if the war goes on much longer, wife or no wife, I'm going to do something. With my knowledge of languages I ought to be of some service in the Censorship Department. That's where you were, wasn't it?"

That was the mark at which he had been aiming and in answer now to his well-directed questions Ashenden gave him the information that he had already prepared. Caypor drew his chair a little nearer and dropped his voice.

"I'm sure you wouldn't tell me anything that anyone shouldn't know, but after all these Swiss are absolutely pro-German and we don't want to give anyone the chance of overhearing."

Then he went on another tack. He told Ashenden a number of things that were of a certain secrecy.

"I wouldn't tell this to anybody else, you know, but I have one or two friends who are in pretty influential positions, and they know they can trust me."

Thus encouraged Ashenden was a little more deliberately indiscreet and when they parted both had reason to be satisfied. Ashenden guessed that Caypor's typewriter would be kept busy next morning and that that extremely energetic Major in Berne would shortly receive a most interesting report.

One evening, going upstairs after dinner, Ashenden passed an open bath-room. He caught sight of the Caypors.

"Come in," cried Caypor in his cordial way. "We're washing our Fritz."

The bull-terrier was constantly getting himself very dirty, and it was Caypor's pride to see him clean and white. Ashenden went in. Mrs. Caypor with her sleeves turned up and a large white apron was standing at one end of the bath, while Caypor, in a pair of trousers and a singlet, his fat, freckled arms bare, was soaping the wretched hound.

"We have to do it at night," he said, "because the Fitzgeralds use this bath and they'd have a fit if they knew we washed the dog in it. We wait till they go to bed. Come along, Fritz, show the gentleman

how beautifully you behave when you have your face scrubbed."

The poor brute, woe-begone but faintly wagging his tail to show that however foul was this operation performed on him he bore no malice to the god who did it, was standing in the middle of the bath in six inches of water. He was soaped all over and Caypor, talking the while, shampooed him with his great fat hands.

"Oh, what a beautiful dog he's going to be when he's as white as the driven snow. His master will be as proud as Punch to walk out with him and all the little lady-dogs will say: good gracious, who's that beautiful aristocratic-looking bull-terrier walking as though he owned the whole of Switzerland? Now stand still while you have your ears washed. You couldn't bear to go out into the street with dirty ears, could you? Like a nasty little Swiss schoolboy. *Noblesse oblige*. Now the black nose. Oh, and all the soap is going into his little pink eyes and they'll smart."

Mrs. Caypor listened to this nonsense with a good-humoured sluggish smile on her broad, plain face, and presently gravely took a towel.

"Now he's going to have a ducking. Upsie-daisy."

Caypor seized the dog by the fore legs and ducked him once and ducked him twice. There was a struggle, a flurry and a splashing. Caypor lifted him out of the bath.

"Now go to mother and she'll dry you."

Mrs. Caypor sat down and taking the dog between her strong legs rubbed him till the sweat poured off her forehead. And Fritz, a little shaken and breathless, but happy it was all over stood, with his sweet stupid face, white and shining.

"Blood will tell," cried Caypor exultantly. "He knows the names of no less than sixty-four of his ancestors, and they were all nobly born."

Ashenden was faintly troubled. He shivered a little as he walked upstairs.

Then, one Sunday, Caypor told him that he and his wife were going on an excursion and would eat their luncheon at some little mountain restaurant; and he suggested that Ashenden, each paying his share, should come with them. After three weeks at Lucerne Ashenden thought that his strength would permit him to venture the exertion. They started early, Mrs. Caypor businesslike in her walking boots and Tyrolean hat and alpenstock, and Caypor in stockings and plus-fours looking very British. The situation amused Ashenden and he was prepared to enjoy his day; but he meant to keep his eyes open; it was not inconceivable that the Caypors had discovered what he was and it would not do to go too near a precipice: Mrs. Caypor would not hesitate to give him a push and Caypor for all his jolliness was an ugly customer. But on the face of it there was nothing to mar Ashenden's pleasure in the golden morning. The air was fragrant. Caypor was full

of conversation. He told funny stories. He was gay and jovial. The sweat rolled off his great red face and he laughed at himself because he was so fat. To Ashenden's astonishment he showed a peculiar knowledge of the mountain flowers. Once he went out of the way to pick one he saw a little distance from the path and brought it back to his wife. He looked at it tenderly.

"Isn't it lovely?" he cried, and his shifty grey-green eyes for a moment were as candid as a child's. "It's like a poem by Walter Savage Landor."

"Botany is my husband's favourite science," said Mrs. Caypor. "I laugh at him sometimes. He is devoted to flowers. Often when we have hardly had enough money to pay the butcher he has spent everything in his pocket to bring me a bunch of roses."

"*Qui fleurit sa maison fleurit son cœur*," said Grantley Caypor.

Ashenden had once or twice seen Caypor, coming in from a walk, offer Mrs. Fitzgerald a nosegay of mountain flowers with an elephantine courtesy that was not entirely displeasing; and what he had just learned added a certain significance to the pretty little action. His passion for flowers was genuine and when he gave them to the old Irish lady he gave her something he valued. It showed a real kindness of heart. Ashenden had always thought botany a tedious science, but Caypor, talking exuberantly as they walked along, was able to impart to it life and interest. He must have given it a good deal of study.

"I've never written a book," he said. "There are too many books already and any desire to write I have is satisfied by the more immediately profitable and quite ephemeral composition of an article for a daily paper. But if I stay here much longer I have half a mind to write a book about the wild flowers of Switzerland. Oh, I wish you'd been here a little earlier. They were marvellous. But one wants to be a poet for that, and I'm only a poor newspaper man."

It was curious to observe how he was able to combine real emotion with false fact.

When they reached the inn, with its view of the mountains and the lake, it was good to see the sensual pleasure with which he poured down his throat a bottle of ice-cold beer. You could not but feel sympathy for a man who took so much delight in simple things. They lunched deliciously off scrambled eggs and mountain trout. Even Mrs. Caypor was moved to an unwonted gentleness by her surroundings; the inn was in an agreeably rural spot, it looked like a picture of a Swiss chalet in a book of early nineteenth century travels; and she treated Ashenden with something less than her usual hostility. When they arrived she had burst into loud German exclamations on the beauty of the scene, and now, softened perhaps too by food and drink, her eyes dwelling on the grandeur before her, filled with tears. She stretched out her hand.

"It is dreadful and I am ashamed, notwithstanding this horrible and unjust war I can feel in my heart at the moment nothing but happiness and gratitude."

Caypor took her hand and pressed it and, an unusual thing with him, addressing her in German, called her little pet-names. It was absurd, but touching. Ashenden, leaving them to their emotions, strolled through the garden and sat down on a bench that had been prepared for the comfort of the tourist. The view was of course spectacular, but it captured you; it was like a piece of music that was obvious and meretricious, but for the moment shattered your self-control.

And as Ashenden lingered idly in that spot he pondered over the mystery of Grantley Capor's treachery. If he liked strange people he had found in him one who was strange beyond belief. It would be foolish to deny that he had amiable traits. His joviality was not assumed, he was without pretence a hearty fellow, and he had real good nature. He was always ready to do a kindness. Ashenden had often watched him with the old Irish Colonel and his wife who were the only other residents of the hotel; he would listen good-humouredly to the old man's tedious stories of the Egyptian war, and he was charming with her. Now that Ashenden had arrived at terms of some familiarity with Caypor he found that he regarded him less with repulsion than with curiosity. He did not think that he had become a spy merely for the money; he was a man of modest tastes and what he had earned in a shipping-office must have sufficed to so good a manager as Mrs. Caypor; and after war was declared there was no lack of remunerative work for men over the military age. It might be that he was one of those men who prefer devious ways to straight for some intricate pleasure they get in fooling their fellows; and that he had turned spy, not from hatred of the country that had imprisoned him, not even from love of his wife, but from a desire to score off the big-wigs who never even knew of his existence. It might be that it was vanity that impelled him, a feeling that his talents had not received the recognition they merited, or just a puckish, impish desire to do mischief. He was a crook. It is true that only two cases of dishonesty had been brought home to him, but if he had been caught twice it might be surmised that he had often been dishonest without being caught. What did Mrs. Caypor think of this? They were so united that she must be aware of it. Did it make her ashamed, for her own uprightness surely none could doubt, or did she accept it as an inevitable kink in the man she loved? Did she do all she could to prevent it or did she close her eyes to something she could not help?

How much easier life would be if people were all black or all white and how much simpler it would be to act in regard to them! Was Caypor a good man who loved evil or a bad man who loved good? And

how could such unreconcilable elements exist side by side and in harmony within the same heart? For one thing was clear, Caypor was disturbed by no gnawing of conscience; he did his mean and despicable work with gusto. He was a traitor who enjoyed his treachery. Though Ashenden had been studying human nature more or less consciously all his life, it seemed to him that he knew as little about it now in middle age as he had done when he was a child. Of course R. would have said to him: why the devil do you waste your time with such nonsense? The man's a dangerous spy and your business is to lay him by the heels.

That was true enough. Ashenden had decided that it would be useless to attempt to make any arrangement with Caypor. Though doubtless he would have no feeling about betraying his employers he could certainly not be trusted. His wife's influence was too strong. Besides, notwithstanding what he had from time to time told Ashenden, he was in his heart convinced that the Central Powers must win the war, and he meant to be on the winning side. Well, then Caypor must be laid by the heels, but how he was to effect that Ashenden had no notion. Suddenly he heard a voice.

"There you are. We've been wondering where you had hidden yourself."

He looked round and saw the Caypors strolling towards him. They were walking hand in hand.

"So this is what has kept you so quiet," said Caypor as his eyes fell on the view. "What a spot!"

Mrs. Caypor clasped her hands.

"Ach Gott, wie schön!" she cried. "Wie schön. When I look at that blue lake and those snowy mountains I feel inclined, like Goethe's Faust, to cry to the passing moment: tarry."

"This is better than being in England with the excursions and alarms of war, isn't it?" said Caypor.

"Much," said Ashenden.

"By the way, did you have any difficulty in getting out?"

"No, not the smallest."

"I'm told they make rather a nuisance of themselves at the frontier nowadays."

"I came through without the smallest difficulty. I don't fancy they bother much about the English. I thought the examination of passports was quite perfunctory."

A fleeting glance passed between Caypor and his wife. Ashenden wondered what it meant. It would be strange if Caypor's thoughts were occupied with the chances of a journey to England at the very moment when he was himself reflecting on its possibility. In a little while Mrs. Caypor suggested that they had better be starting back and

they wandered together in the shade of trees down the mountain paths.

Ashenden was watchful. He could do nothing (and his inactivity irked him) but wait with his eyes open to seize the opportunity that might present itself. A couple of days later an incident occurred that made him certain something was in the wind. In the course of his morning lesson Mrs. Caypor remarked:

"My husband has gone to Geneva to-day. He had some business to do there."

"Oh," said Ashenden, "will he be gone long?"

"No, only two days."

It is not everyone who can tell a lie and Ashenden had the feeling, he hardly knew why, that Mrs. Caypor was telling one then. Her manner perhaps was not quite as indifferent as you would have expected when she was mentioning a fact that could be of no interest to Ashenden. It flashed across his mind that Caypor had been summoned to Berne to see the redoubtable head of the German secret service. When he had the chance he said casually to the waitress:

"A little less work for you to do, *fräulein*. I hear that Herr Caypor has gone to Berne."

"Yes. But he'll be back to-morrow."

That proved nothing, but it was something to go upon. Ashenden knew in Lucerne a Swiss who was willing on emergency to do odd jobs and, looking him up, asked him to take a letter to Berne. It might be possible to pick up Caypor and trace his movements. Next day Caypor appeared once more with his wife at the dinner-table, but merely nodded to Ashenden and afterwards both went straight upstairs. They looked troubled. Caypor, as a rule so animated, walked with bowed shoulders and looked neither to the right nor to the left. Next morning Ashenden received a reply to his letter: Caypor had seen Major von P. It was possible to guess what the Major had said to him. Ashenden well knew how rough he could be: he was a hard man and brutal, clever and unscrupulous and he was not accustomed to mince his words. They were tired of paying Caypor a salary to sit still in Lucerne and do nothing; the time was come for him to go to England. Guess-work? Of course it was guess-work, but in that trade it mostly was: you had to deduce the animal from its jaw-bone. Ashenden knew from Gustav that the Germans wanted to send someone to England. He drew a long breath; if Caypor went he would have to get busy.

When Mrs. Caypor came in to give him his lesson she was dull and listless. She looked tired and her mouth was set obstinately. It occurred to Ashenden that the Caypors had spent most of the night talking. He wished he knew what they had said. Did she urge him to go or did she try to dissuade him? Ashenden watched them again at luncheon. Something was the matter, for they hardly spoke to one another and as a

rule they found plenty to talk about. They left the room early, but when Ashenden went out he saw Caypor sitting in the hall by himself.

"Hulloa," he cried jovially, but surely the effort was patent, "how are you getting on? I've been to Geneva."

"So I heard," said Ashenden.

"Come and have your coffee with me. My poor wife's got a headache. I told her she'd better go and lie down." In his shifty green eyes was an expression that Ashenden could not read. "The fact is, she's rather worried, poor dear; I'm thinking of going to England."

Ashenden's heart gave a sudden leap against his ribs, but his face remained impassive.

"Oh, are you going for long? We shall miss you."

"To tell you the truth, I'm fed up with doing nothing. The war looks as though it were going on for years and I can't sit here indefinitely. Besides, I can't afford it, I've got to earn my living. I may have a German wife, but I am an Englishman, hang it all, and I want to do my bit. I could never face my friends again if I just stayed here in ease and comfort till the end of the war and never attempted to do a thing to help the country. My wife takes her German point of view and I don't mind telling you she's a bit upset. You know what women are."

Now Ashenden knew what it was that he saw in Caypor's eyes. Fear. It gave him a nasty turn. Caypor didn't want to go to England, he wanted to stay safely in Switzerland; Ashenden knew now what the major had said to him when he went to see him in Berne. He had got to go or lose his salary. What was it that his wife had said when he told her what had happened? He had wanted her to press him to stay, but, it was plain, she hadn't done that; perhaps he had not dared tell her how frightened he was; to her he had always been gay, bold, adventurous and devil-may-care; and now, the prisoner of his own lies, he had not found it in him to confess himself the mean and sneaking coward he was.

"Are you going to take your wife with you?" asked Ashenden.

"No, she'll stay here."

It had been arranged very neatly. Mrs. Caypor would receive his letters and forward the information they contained to Berne.

"I've been out of England so long that I don't quite know how to set about getting war-work. What would you do in my place?"

"I don't know; what sort of work are you thinking of?"

"Well, you know, I imagine I could do the same thing as you did. I wonder if there's anyone in the Censorship Department that you could give me a letter of introduction to."

It was only by a miracle that Ashenden saved himself from showing by a smothered cry or by a broken gesture how startled he was; but not by Caypor's request, by what had just dawned upon him. What an

idiot he had been! He had been disturbed by the thought that he was wasting his time at Lucerne, he was doing nothing, and though in fact, as it turned out, Caypor was going to England it was due to no cleverness of his. He could take to himself no credit for the result. And now he saw that he had been put in Lucerne, told how to describe himself and given the proper information, so that what actually had occurred should occur. It would be a wonderful thing for the German secret service to get an agent into the Censorship Department; and by a happy accident there was Grantley Caypor, the very man for the job, on friendly terms with someone who had worked there. What a bit of luck! Major von P. was a man of culture and, rubbing his hands, he must surely have murmured: *stultum facit fortuna quem vult perdere*. It was a trap of that devilish R. and the grim major at Berne had fallen into it. Ashenden had done his work just by sitting still and doing nothing. He almost laughed as he thought what a fool R. had made of him.

"I was on very good terms with the chief of my department, I could give you a note to him if you liked."

"That would be just the thing."

"But of course I must give the facts. I must say I've met you here and only known you a fortnight."

"Of course. But you'll say what else you can for me, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly."

"I don't know yet if I can get a visa. I'm told they're rather fussy."

"I don't see why. I shall be very sick if they refuse me one when I want to go back."

"I'll go and see how my wife is getting on," said Caypor suddenly, getting up. "When will you let me have that letter?"

"Whenever you like. Are you going at once?"

"As soon as possible."

Caypor left him. Ashenden waited in the hall for a quarter of an hour so that there should appear in him no sign of hurry. Then he went upstairs and prepared various communications. In one he informed R. that Caypor was going to England; in another he made arrangements through Berne that wherever Caypor applied for a visa it should be granted to him without question; and these he despatched forthwith. When he went down to dinner he handed Caypor a cordial letter of introduction.

Next day but one Caypor left Lucerne.

Ashenden waited. He continued to have his hour's lesson with Mrs. Caypor and under her conscientious tuition began now to speak German with ease. They talked of Goethe and Winckelmann, of art and life and travel. Fritz sat quietly by her chair.

"He misses his master," she said, pulling his ears. "He only really cares for him, he suffers me only as belonging to him."

After his lesson Ashenden went every morning to Cook's to ask for his letters. It was here that all communications were addressed to him. He could not move till he received instructions, but R. could be trusted not to leave him idle long; and meanwhile there was nothing for him to do but have patience. Presently he received a letter from the consul in Geneva to say that Caypor had there applied for his visa and had set out for France. Having read this Ashenden went on for a little stroll by the lake and on his way back happened to see Mrs. Caypor coming out of Cook's office. He guessed that she was having her letters addressed there too. He went up to her.

"Have you had news of Herr Caypor?" he asked her.

"No," she said. "I suppose I could hardly expect to yet."

He walked along by her side. She was disappointed, but not yet anxious; she knew how irregular at that time was the post. But next day during the lesson he could not but see that she was impatient to have done with it. The post was delivered at noon and at five minutes to she looked at her watch and him. Though Ashenden knew very well that no letter would ever come for her he had not the heart to keep her on tenter-hooks.

"Don't you think that's enough for the day? I'm sure you want to go down to Cook's," he said.

"Thank you. That is very amiable of you."

Later he went there himself and he found her standing in the middle of the office. Her face was distraught. She addressed him wildly.

"My husband promised to write from Paris. I am sure there is a letter for me, but these stupid people say there's nothing. They're so careless, it's a scandal."

Ashenden did not know what to say. While the clerk was looking through the bundle to see if there was anything for him she came up to the desk again.

"When does the next post come in from France?" she asked.

"Sometimes there are letters about five."

"I'll come then."

She turned and walked rapidly away. Fritz followed her with his tail between his legs. There was no doubt of it, already the fear had seized her that something was wrong. Next morning she looked dreadful; she could not have closed her eyes all night; and in the middle of the lesson she started up from her chair.

"You must excuse me, Herr Somerville, I cannot give you a lesson to-day. I am not feeling well."

Before Ashenden could say anything she had flung nervously from the room, and in the evening he got a note from her to say that she regretted that she must discontinue giving him conversation lessons. She gave no reason. Then Ashenden saw no more of her; she ceased

coming in to meals; except to go morning and afternoon to Cook's she spent apparently the whole day in her room. Ashenden thought of her sitting there hour after hour with that hideous fear gnawing at her heart. Who could help feeling sorry for her? The time hung heavy on his hands too. He read a good deal and wrote a little, he hired a canoe and went for long leisurely paddles on the lake; and at last one morning the clerk at Cook's handed him a letter. It was from R. It had all the appearance of a business communication, but between the lines he read a good deal.

Dear Sir, it began, *The goods, with accompanying letter, despatched by you from Lucerne have been duly delivered. We are obliged to you for executing our instructions with such promptness.*

It went on in this strain. R. was exultant. Ashenden guessed that Caypor had been arrested and by now had paid the penalty of his crime. He shuddered. He remembered a dreadful scene. Dawn. A cold, grey dawn, with a drizzling rain falling. A man, blindfolded, standing against a wall, an officer very pale giving an order, a volley, and then a young soldier, one of the firing-party, turning round and holding on to his gun for support, vomiting. The officer turned paler still, and he, Ashenden, feeling dreadfully faint. How terrified Caypor must have been! It was awful when the tears ran down their faces. Ashenden shook himself. He went to the ticket-office and obedient to his orders bought himself a ticket for Geneva.

As he was waiting for his change Mrs. Caypor came in. He was shocked at the sight of her. She was blowsy and dishevelled and there were heavy rings round her eyes. She was deathly pale. She staggered up to the desk and asked for a letter. The clerk shook his head.

"I'm sorry, madam, there's nothing yet."

"But look, look. Are you sure? Please look again."

The misery in her voice was heart-rending. The clerk with a shrug of the shoulders took out the letters from a pigeon-hole and sorted them once more.

"No, there's nothing, madam."

She gave a hoarse cry of despair and her face was distorted with anguish.

"Oh, God, oh, God," she moaned.

She turned away, the tears streaming from her weary eyes, and for a moment she stood there like a blind man groping and not knowing which way to go. Then a fearful thing happened. Fritz, the bull-terrier, sat down on his haunches and threw back his head and gave a long, long melancholy howl. Mrs. Caypor looked at him with terror; her eyes seemed really to start from her head. The doubt, the gnawing doubt that had tortured her during those dreadful days of suspense, was a doubt no longer. She knew. She staggered blindly into the street.

ERIC AMBLER

One of the most highly praised mystery writers of our sophisticated day is Eric Ambler, brilliant young Englishman, for whom even the most carping critics of the spy-and-intrigue story have only applause and words of admiration. It has been said of him that he "streamlined" the old-fashioned secret-service novel, which was becoming a bit dowdy, replacing its stereotyped situations and slinky females in black velvet with skilful plotwork and characterization, and with believable human beings. Moreover, although there is ample physical action in Ambler's tales, says Howard Haycraft, the mystery specialist, "cerebration is for once as important as shooting; the two are blended with neatness and credibility." His first memorable novel was *A Coffin for Dimitrios*: although not quite his first book, its appearance in 1939 was greeted with rapture by the initiate and obviously marked the arrival of a new and fascinating talent. Few of his short stories appear to be known, so the editor believes himself to be a benefactor in presenting *The Army of the Shadows*, a clever example of Ambler's best mood, now first published in America.

THE ARMY OF THE SHADOWS

IT IS THREE YEARS since Llewellyn removed my appendix; but we still meet occasionally. I am dimly related to his wife: that, at least, is the pretext for the acquaintanceship. The truth is that, during my convalescence, we happened to discover that we both like the same musicians. Before the war we usually met when there was some Sibelius being played and went to hear it together. I was a little puzzled when, about three weeks ago, he telephoned with the suggestion that I should dine at his house that night. There was not, I knew, a concert of any sort in London. I agreed, however, to grope my way round to Upper Wimpole Street shortly before eight o'clock.

It was not until he had presented me with a brandy that I found out why I had been invited to dinner.

"Do you remember," he said suddenly, "that I spent a week or so in Belgrade last year? I missed Beecham doing the Second through it. There was one of those international medical bun fights being held there, and I went to represent the Association. My German is fairly good, you know. I motored. Can't stick trains. Anyway, on the way back a very funny thing happened to me. Did I ever tell you about it?"

"I don't think so."

"I thought not. Well"—he laughed self-consciously—"it was so funny now there's a war on that I've been amusing myself by writing the whole thing down. I wondered whether you'd be good enough to cast a professional eye over it for me. I've tried"—he laughed again—"to make a really literary job of it. Like a story, you know."

His hand had been out of sight behind the arm of his chair, but now it emerged from hiding holding a wad of typewritten sheets.

"It's typed," he said, planking it down on my knees. And then, with a theatrical glance at his watch, "Good Lord, it's ten. There's a telephone call I must make. Excuse me for a minute or two, will you?"

He was out of the room before I could open my mouth to reply. I was left alone with the manuscript.

I picked it up. It was entitled *A Strange Encounter*. With a sigh, I turned over the title page and began, rather irritably, to read:

The Stelvio Pass is snowed up in winter, and towards the end of November most sensible men driving to Paris from Belgrade or beyond take the long way round via Milan rather than risk being stopped by an early fall of snow. But I was in a hurry and took a chance. By the time I reached Bolzano I was sorry I had done so. It was bitterly cold, and the sky ahead was leaden. At Merano I seriously considered turning back. Instead, I pushed on as hard as I could go. If I had had any sense I should have stopped for petrol before I started the really serious part of the climb. I had six gallons by the gauge then. I knew that it wasn't accurate, but I had filled up early that morning and calculated that I had enough to get me to Sargans. In my anxiety to beat the snow I overlooked the fact that I had miles of low-gear driving to do. On the Swiss side and on the Sargans road where it runs within a mile or two of the Rhätikon part of the German frontier, the car spluttered to a standstill.

For a minute or two I sat there swearing at and to myself and wondering what on earth I was going to do. I was, I knew, the only thing on the road that night for miles.

It was about eight o'clock, very dark and very cold. Except for the faint creaking of the cooling engine and the rustle of the breeze in some nearby trees, there wasn't a sound to be heard. Ahead, the road in the headlights curved away to the right. I got out the map and tried to find out where I was.

I had passed through one village since I left Klosters, and I knew that it was about ten kilometres back. I must, therefore, either walk back ten kilometres to that village, or forward to the next village, whichever was the nearer. I looked at the map. It was of that useless kind that they sell to motorists. There was nothing marked between Klosters and

Sargans. For all I knew, the next village might be fifteen or twenty kilometers away.

An Alpine road on a late November night is not the place to choose if you want to sleep in your car. I decided to walk back the way I had come.

I had a box of those small Italian waxed matches with me when I started out. There were, I thought, about a hundred in the box, and I calculated that, if I struck one every hundred metres, they would last until I reached the village.

That was when I was near the lights of the car. When I got out of sight of them, things were different. The darkness seemed to press against the backs of my eyes. It was almost painful. I could not even see the shape of the road along which I was walking. It was only by the rustling and the smell of resin that I knew that I was walking between fir trees. By the time I had covered a mile I had six matches left. Then it began to snow.

I say "snow." It had been snow; but the Sargans road was still below the snow-line, and the stuff came down as a sort of half-frozen mush that slid down my face into the gap between my coat collar and my neck.

I must have done about another mile and a half when the real trouble began. I still had the six matches, but my hands were too numb to get them out of the box without wetting them, and I had been going forward blindly, sometimes on the road and sometimes off it. I was wondering whether I would get along better if I sang, when I walked into a telegraph post.

It was of pre-cast concrete and the edge was as sharp as a razor. My face was as numb as my hands and I didn't feel much except a sickening jar; but I could taste blood trickling between my teeth and found that my nose was bleeding. It was as I held my head back to stop it that I saw the light, looking for all the world as if it were suspended in mid-air above me.

It wasn't suspended in mid-air, and it wasn't above me. Darkness does strange things to perspective. After a few seconds I saw that it was showing through the trees on the hillside, up off the right of the road.

Anyone who has been in the sort of mess that I was in will know exactly how my mind worked at that moment. I did not speculate as to the origin of that God-forsaken light or as to whether or not the owner of it would be pleased to see me. I was cold and wet, my nose was bleeding, and I would not have cared if someone had told me that behind the light was a maniac with a machine-gun. I knew only that the light meant that there was some sort of human habitation near me and that I was going to spend the night in it.

I moved over to the other side of the road and began to feel my way

along the wire fence I found there. Twenty yards or so farther on, my hands touched a wooden gate. The light was no longer visible, but I pushed the gate open and walked on into the blackness.

The ground rose steeply under my feet. It was a path of sorts, and soon I stumbled over the beginnings of a flight of log steps. There must have been well over a hundred of them. Then there was another stretch of path, not quite so steep. When I again saw the light, I was only about twenty yards from it.

It came from an oil reading-lamp standing near a window. From the shape of the window and the reflected light of the lamp, I could see that the place was a small chalet of the kind usually let to families for the summer season or for the winter sports. That it should be occupied at the end of November was curious. But I didn't ponder over the curiosity: I had seen something else through the window besides the lamp. The light from a fire was flickering in the room.

I went forward up the path to the door. There was no knocker. I hammered on the wet, varnished wood with my fist and waited. There was no sound from inside. After a moment or two I knocked again. Still there was no sign of life within. I knocked and waited for several minutes. Then I began to shiver. In desperation I grabbed the latch of the door and rattled it violently. The next moment I felt it give and the door creaked open a few inches.

I think that I have a normal, healthy respect for the property and privacy of my fellow-creatures; but at that moment I was feeling neither normal nor healthy. Obviously, the owner of the chalet could not be far away. I stood there for a moment or two, hesitating. I could smell the wood smoke from the fire, and mingled with it a bitter, oily smell which seemed faintly familiar. But all I cared about was the fire. I hesitated no longer and walked in.

As soon as I was inside I saw that there was something more than curious about the place, and that I should have waited.

The room itself was ordinary enough. It was rather larger than I had expected, but there were the usual pinewood walls, the usual pinewood floor, the usual pinewood staircase up to the bedrooms, and the usual tiled fireplace. There were the usual tables and chairs, too: turned and painted nonsense of the kind that sometimes finds its way into English tea-shops. There were red gingham curtains over the windows. You felt that the owner probably had lots of other places just like it, and that he made a good thing out of letting them.

No, it was what had been added to the room that was curious. All the furniture had been crowded into one half of the space. In the other half, standing on linoleum and looking as if it were used a good deal, was a printing press.

The machine was a small treadle platten of the kind used by jobbing

printers for running off tradesmen's circulars. It looked very old and decrepit. Alongside it on a trestle-table were a case of type and a small proofing press with a locked-up forme in it. On a second table stood a pile of interleaved sheets, beside which was a stack of what appeared to be some of the same sheets folded. The folding was obviously being done by hand. I picked up one of the folded sheets.

It looked like one of those long, narrow business-promotion folders issued by travel agencies. The front page was devoted to the reproduction, in watery blue ink, of a lino-cut of a clump of pines on the shore of a lake, and the display of the word "TITISEE." Page two and the page folded in to face it carried a rhapsodical account in German of the beauties of Baden in general and Lake Titisee in particular.

I put the folder down. An inaccessible Swiss chalet was an odd place to choose for printing German travel advertisements; but I was not disposed to dwell on its oddity. I was cold.

I was moving towards the fire when my eye was caught by five words printed in bold capitals on one of the unfolded sheets on the table: "DEUTSCHE MÄNNER UND FRAUEN, KAMERADEN!"

I stood still. I remember that my heart thudded against my ribs as suddenly and violently as it had earlier that day on the Stelvio when some crazy fool in a Hispano had nearly crowded me off the road.

I leaned forward, picked the folder up again, and opened it right out. The message began on the second of the three inside pages.

"GERMAN MEN AND WOMEN, COMRADES! We speak to you with the voice of German Democracy, bringing you news. Neither Nazi propaganda nor the Gestapo can silence us, for we have an ally which is proof against floggings, an ally which no man in the history of the world has been able to defeat. That ally is Truth. Hear then, people of Germany, the Truth which is concealed from you. Hear it, remember it, and repeat it. The sooner the Truth is known, the sooner will Germany again hold up its head among the free nations of the world."

Then followed a sort of news bulletin consisting of facts and figures (especially figures) about the economic condition of Germany. There was also news of a strike in the Krupp works at Essen and a short description of a riot outside a shipyard in Hamburg.

I put it down again. Now I knew why these "travel advertisements" were being printed in an inaccessible Swiss chalet instead of in Germany itself. No German railway official would distribute these folders. That business would be left to more desperate men. These folders would not collect dust on the counters of travel agencies. They would be found in trains and in trams, in buses and in parked cars, in waiting-rooms and in bars, under restaurant plates and inside table napkins. Some of the men that put them there would be caught and tortured to betray their fellows; but the distribution would go on. The folders would be

read, perhaps furtively discussed. A little more truth would seep through Goebbels' dam of lies to rot still further the creaking foundation of Nazidom.

Then, as I stood there with the smell of wood smoke and printing ink in my nostrils, as I stood staring at that decrepit little machine as if it were the very voice of freedom, I heard footsteps outside.

I suppose that I should have stood my ground. I had, after all, a perfectly good explanation of my presence there. My car and the blood from my nose would confirm my story. But I didn't reason that way. I had stumbled on a secret, and my first impulse was to try to hide the fact from the owner of the secret. I obeyed that impulse.

I looked round quickly and saw the stairs. Before I had even begun to wonder if I might not be doing something excessively stupid, I was up the stairs and opening the first door I came to on the landing. In the half-light I caught a glimpse of a bed; then I was inside the room with the door slightly ajar. I could see across the landing and through the wooden palings along it to the top of the window at the far side of the room below.

I knew that someone had come in: I could hear him moving about. He lit another lamp. There was a sound from the door and a second person entered.

A woman's voice said in German, "Thank God, Johann has left a good fire."

There was an answering grunt. It came from the man. I could almost feel them warming their hands.

"Get the coffee, Freda," said the man suddenly. "I must go back soon."

"But Bruno is there. You should take a little rest first."

"Bruno is a Berliner. He is not as used to the cold as I am. If Kurt should come now he would be tired. Bruno could only look after himself."

There was silence for a moment. Then the woman spoke again.

"Do you really think that he will come now, Stephan? It is so late." She paused. Her voice had sounded casual, elaborately casual; but now, as she went on, there was an edge to it that touched the nerves. "I can keep quite calm about it, you see, Stephan. I wish to believe, but it is so late, isn't it? You don't think he will come now, do you? Admit it."

He laughed, but too heartily. "You are too nervous, Freda. Kurt can take care of himself. He knows all the tricks now. He may have been waiting for the first snow. The frontier guards would not be so alert on a night like this."

"He should have been back a week ago. You know that as well as I do, Stephan. He has never been delayed so long before. They have got him. That is all. You see, I can be calm about it even though he is my

dear husband." And then her voice broke. "I knew it would happen sooner or later. I knew it. First Hans, then Karl, and now Kurt. Those swine, those——"

She sobbed and broke suddenly into passionate weeping. He tried helplessly to comfort her.

I had heard enough. I was shaking from head to foot; but whether it was the cold or not, I don't know. I stood back from the door. Then, as I did so, I heard a sound from behind me.

I had noticed the bed as I had slipped into the room, but the idea that there might be someone in it had not entered my head. Now, as I whipped round, I saw that I had made a serious mistake.

Sitting on the edge of the bed in which he had been lying was a very thin, middle-aged man in a nightshirt. By the faint light from the landing I could see his eyes, bleary from sleep, and his grizzled hair standing ludicrously on end. But for one thing I should have laughed. That one thing was the large automatic pistol which he held pointed at me. His hand was as steady as a rock.

"Don't move," he said. He raised his voice. "Stephan! Come quickly!"

"I must apologise . . ." I began in German.

"You will be allowed to speak later."

I heard Stephan dash up the stairs.

"What is it, Johann?"

"Come here."

The door was pushed open behind me. I heard him draw in his breath sharply.

"Who is it?"

"I do not know. I was awakened by a noise. I was about to get up when this man came into the room. He did not see me. He has been listening to your conversation. He must have been examining the plant when he heard you returning."

"If you will allow me to explain . . ."

"You may explain downstairs," said the man called Stephan. "Give me the pistol, Johann."

The pistol changed hands and I could see Stephan, a lean, rawboned fellow with broad, sharp shoulders and dangerous eyes. He wore black oilskins and gum-boots. I saw the muscles in his cheeks tighten.

"Raise your hands and walk downstairs. Slowly. If you run, I shall shoot immediately. March."

I went downstairs.

The woman, Freda, was standing by the door, staring blankly up at me as I descended. She must have been about thirty and had that soft rather matronly look about her that is characteristic of so many young German women. She was short and plump, and as if to accentuate the fact, her straw-coloured hair was plaited across her head. Wisps of the

hair had become detached and clung wetly to the sides of her neck. She too wore a black oilskin coat and gum-boots.

The grey eyes, red and swollen with crying, looked beyond me.

"Who is it, Stephan?"

"He was hiding upstairs."

We had reached the foot of the stairs. He motioned me away from the door and towards the fire. "Now, we will hear your explanation."

I gave it with profuse apologies. I admitted that I had examined the folders and read one. "It seemed to me," I concluded, "that my presence might be embarrassing to you. I was about to leave when you returned. Then, I am afraid, I lost my head and attempted to hide."

Not one of them was believing a word that I was saying: I could see that from their faces. "I assure you," I went on in exasperation, "that what I am telling . . ."

"What nationality are you?"

"British. I . . ."

"Then speak English. What were you doing on this road?"

"I am on my way home from Belgrade. I crossed the Yugoslav frontier yesterday and the Italian frontier at Stelvio this afternoon. My passport was stamped at both places if you wish to . . ."

"Why were you in Belgrade?"

"I am a surgeon. I have been attending an international medical convention there."

"Let me see your passport, please."

"Certainly. I have . . ." And then with my hand in my inside pocket, I stopped. My heart felt as if it had come right into my throat. In my haste to be away after the Italian Customs had finished with me, I had thrust my passport with the Customs carnet for the car into the pocket beside me on the door of the car.

They were watching me with expressionless faces. Now, as my hand reappeared empty, I saw Stephan raise his pistol.

"Well?"

"I am sorry." Like a fool I had begun to speak in German again. "I find that I have left my passport in my car. It is several kilometres along the road. If . . ."

And then the woman burst out as if she couldn't stand listening to me any longer.

"Don't you see? Don't you see?" she cried. "It is quite clear. They have found out that we are here. Perhaps after all these months Hans or Karl has been tortured by them into speaking. And so they have taken Kurt and sent this man to spy upon us. It is clear. Don't you see?"

She turned suddenly, and I thought she was going to attack me. Then Stephan put his hand on her arm.

"Gently, Freda." He turned to me again, and his expression hard-

ened. "You see, my friend, what is in our minds? We know our danger, you see. The fact that we are in Swiss territory will not protect us if the Gestapo should trace us. The Nazis, we know, have little respect for frontiers. The Gestapo have none. They would murder us here as confidently as they would if we were in the Third Reich. We do not underrate their cunning. The fact that you are not a German is not conclusive. You may be what you say you are: you may not. If you are, so much the better. If not, then, I give you fair warning, you will be shot. You say that your passport is in your car several kilometres along the road. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to spare time tonight to see if that is true. Nor is it possible for one of us to stand guard over you all night. You have already disturbed the first sleep Johann has had in twenty-four hours. There is only one thing for it, I'm afraid. It is undignified and barbaric; but I see no other way. We shall be forced to tie you up so that you cannot leave."

"But this is absurd," I cried angrily. "Good heavens, man, I realise that I've only myself to blame for being here; but surely you could have the common decency to . . ."

"The question," he said sternly, "is not of decency, but of necessity. We have no time tonight for six-kilometre walks. One of our comrades has been delivering a consignment of these folders to our friends in Germany. We hope and believe that he will return to us across the frontier tonight. He may need our help. Mountaineering in such weather is exhausting. Freda, get me some of the cord we use for tying the packages.

I wanted to say something, but the words would not come. I was too angry. I don't think that I've ever been so angry in my life before.

She brought the cord. It was thick grey stuff. He took it and gave the pistol to Johann. Then he came towards me.

I don't think they liked the business any more than I did. He had gone a bit white and he wouldn't look me in the eyes. I think that I must have been white myself; but it was anger with me. He put the cord under one of my elbows. I snatched it away.

"You had better submit," he said harshly.

"To spare your feelings? Certainly not. You'll have to use force, my friend. But don't worry. You'll get used to it. You'll be a good Nazi yet. You should knock me down. That'll make it easier."

What colour there was left in his face went. A good deal of my anger evaporated at that moment. I felt sorry for the poor devil. I really believe that I should have let him tie me up. But I never knew for certain; for at that moment there was an interruption.

It was the woman who heard it first—the sound of someone running up the path outside. The next moment a man burst wildly into the room.

Stephan had turned. "Bruno! What is it? Why aren't you at the hut?"

The man was striving to get his breath, and for a moment he could hardly speak. His face above the streaming oilskins was blue with cold. Then he gasped out.

"Kurt! He is at the hut! He is wounded—badly!"

The woman gave a little whimpering cry and her hands went to her face. Stephan gripped the new-comer's shoulder.

"What has happened? Quickly!"

"It was dark. The Swiss did not see him. It was one of our patrols. They shot him when he was actually on the Swiss side. He was wounded in the thigh. He crawled on to the hut, but he can go no further. He . . ."

But Stephan had ceased to listen. He turned sharply. "Johann, you must dress yourself at once. Bruno, take the pistol and guard this man. He broke in here. He may be dangerous. Freda, get the cognac and the iodine. We shall need them for Kurt."

He himself went to a cupboard and got out some handkerchiefs, which he began tearing feverishly into strips, which he knotted together. Still gasping for breath, the man Bruno had taken the pistol and was staring at me with a puzzled frown. Then the woman reappeared from the kitchen carrying a bottle of cognac and a small tube of iodine of the sort that is sold for dabbing at cut fingers. Stephan stuffed them in his pockets with the knotted handkerchiefs. Then he called up the stairs, "Hurry, Johann. We are ready to leave."

It was more than I could bear. Professional fussiness, I suppose.

"Has any one of you," I asked loudly, "ever dealt with a bullet wound before?"

They stared at me. Then Stephan glanced at Bruno.

"If he moves," he said, "shoot." He raised his voice again. "Johann!"

There was an answering cry of reassurance.

"Has it occurred to you," I persisted, "that even if you get him here alive, which I doubt, as you obviously don't know what you're doing, he will need immediate medical attention? Don't you think that one of you had better go for a doctor? Ah, but of course; the doctor would ask questions about a bullet wound, wouldn't he? The matter would be reported to the police."

"We can look after him," he grunted. "Johann! Hurry!"

"It seems a pity," I said reflectively, "that one brave man should have to die because of his friends' stupidity." And then my calm deserted me. "You damn fool," I shouted. "Listen to me. Do you want to kill this man? You're going about it the right way. I'm a surgeon, and this is a surgeon's business. Take that cognac out of your pocket. We shan't

need it. The iodine too. And those pieces of rag. Have you got two or three clean towels?"

The woman nodded stupidly.

"Then get them, please, and be quick. And you said something about some coffee. Have you a flask for it? Good. Then we shall take that. Put plenty of sugar in it. I want blankets, too. Three will be enough, but they must be kept dry. We shall need a stretcher. Get two poles or broomsticks and two old coats. We can make a stretcher of sorts by putting the pole through the sleeves of them. Take this cord of yours too. It will be useful to make slings for the stretcher. And hurry! The man may be bleeding to death. Is he far away?"

The man was glowering at me. "Four kilometres. In a climbing hut in the hills this side of the frontier." He stepped forward and gripped my arm. "If you are tricking us . . ." he began.

"I'm not thinking about you," I snapped. "I'm thinking about a man who's been crawling along with a bullet in his thigh and a touching faith in his friends. Now get those poles, and hurry."

They hurried. In three minutes they had the things collected. The exhausted Bruno's oilskins and gum-boots had, at my suggestion, been transferred to me. Then I tied one of the blankets round my waist under my coat, and told Stephan and Johann to do the same.

"I," said the woman, "will take the other things."

"You," I said, "will stay here, please."

She straightened up at that. "No," she said firmly, "I will come with you. I shall be quite calm. You will see."

"Nevertheless," I said rather brutally, "you will be more useful here. A bed must be ready by the fire here. There must also be hot bricks and plenty of blankets. I shall need, besides, both boiled and boiling water. You have plenty of ordinary salt, I suppose?"

"Yes, Herr Doktor. But . . ."

"We are wasting time."

Two minutes later we left.

I shall never forget that climb. It began about half a mile along the road below the chalet. The first part was mostly up narrow paths between trees. They were covered with pine needles and, in the rain, as slippery as the devil. We had been climbing steadily for about half an hour when Stephan, who had been leading the way with a storm lantern, paused.

"I must put out the light here," he said. "The frontier is only three kilometres from here, and the guards patrol to a depth of two kilometres. They must not see us." He blew out the lamp. "Turn round," he said then. "You will see another light."

I saw it, far away below us, a pin-point.

"That is our light. When we are returning from Germany, we can see it from across the frontier and know that we are nearly home and that our friends are waiting. Hold on to my coat now. You need not worry about Johann behind you. He knows the path well. This way, *Herr Doktor*."

It was the only sign he gave that he had decided to accept me for what I said I was.

I cannot conceive of how anyone could know that path well. The surface soon changed from pine needles to a sort of rocky rubble, and it twisted and turned like a wounded snake. The wind had dropped, but it was colder than ever, and I found myself crunching through sugary patches of half-frozen slush. I wondered how on earth we were going to bring down a wounded man on an improvised stretcher.

We had been creeping along without the light for about twenty minutes when Stephan stopped and, shielding the lamp with his coat, relit it. I saw that we had arrived.

The climbing hut was built against the side of an overhanging rock face. It was about six feet square inside, and the man was lying diagonally across it on his face. There was a large bloodstain on the floor beneath him. He was semi-conscious. His eyes were closed, but he mumbled something as I felt for his pulse.

"Will he live?" whispered Stephan.

I didn't know. The pulse was there, but it was feeble and rapid. His breathing was shallow. I looked at the wound. The bullet had entered on the inner side of the left thigh just below the groin. There was a little bleeding, but it obviously hadn't touched the femoral artery and, as far as I could see, the bone was all right. I made a dressing with one of the towels and tied it in place with another. The bullet could wait. The immediate danger was from shock aggravated by exposure. I got to work with the blankets and the flask of coffee. Soon the pulse strengthened a little, and after about half an hour I told them how to prepare the stretcher.

I don't know how they got him down that path in the darkness. It was all I could do to get down by myself. It was snowing hard now in great fleecy chunks that blinded you when you moved forward. I was prepared for them to slip and drop the stretcher; but they didn't. It was slow work, however, and it was a good forty minutes before we got to the point where it was safe to light the lamp.

After that I was able to help with the stretcher. At the foot of the path up to the chalet, I went ahead with the lantern. The woman heard my footsteps and came to the door. I realised that we must have been gone for the best part of three hours.

"They're bringing him up," I said. "He'll be all right. I shall need your help now."

She said, "The bed is ready." And then, "Is it serious, *Herr Doktor*?"

"No." I didn't tell her then that there was a bullet to be taken out.

It was a nasty job. The wound itself wasn't so bad. The bullet must have been pretty well spent, for it had lodged up against the bone without doing any real damage. It was the instruments that made it difficult. They came from the kitchen. He didn't stand up to it very well, and I wasn't surprised. I didn't feel so good myself when I'd finished. The cognac came in useful after all.

We finally got him to sleep about five.

"He'll be all right now," I said.

The woman looked at me and I saw the tears begin to trickle down her cheeks. It was only then that I remembered that she wasn't a nurse, but his wife.

It was Johann who comforted her. Stephan came over to me.

"We owe you a great debt, *Herr Doktor*," he said. "I must apologise for our behaviour earlier this evening. We have not always been savages, you know. Kurt was a professor of zoology. Johann was a master printer. I was an architect. Now we are those who crawl across frontiers at night and plot like criminals. We have been treated like savages, and so we live like them. We forget sometimes that we were civilized. We ask your pardon. I do not know how we can repay you for what you have done. We . . ."

But I was too tired for speeches. I smiled quickly at him.

"All that I need by way of a fee is another glass of cognac and a bed to sleep in for a few hours. I suggest, by the way, that you get a doctor in to look at the patient later today. There will be a little fever to treat. Tell the doctor he fell upon his climbing axe. He won't believe you, but there'll be no bullet for him to be inquisitive about. Oh, and if you could find me a little petrol for my car . . ."

It was five in the afternoon and almost dark again when Stephan woke me. The local doctor, he reported, as he set an enormous tray of food down beside the bed, had been, dressed the wound, prescribed, and gone. My car was filled up with petrol and awaited me below if I wished to drive to Zürich that night. Kurt was awake and could not be prevailed upon to sleep until he had thanked me.

They were all there, grouped about the bed, when I went downstairs. Bruno was the only one who looked as if he had had any sleep.

He sprang to his feet. "Here, Kurt," he said facetiously, "is the *Herr Doktor*. He is going to cut your leg off."

Only the woman did not laugh at the jest. Kurt himself was smiling when I bent over to look at him.

He was a youngish-looking man of about forty with intelligent brown eyes and a high, wide forehead. The smile faded from his face as he looked at me.

"You know what I wish to say, Herr Doktor?"

I took refuge in professional brusqueness. "The less you say, the better," I said, and felt for his pulse. But as I did so his fingers moved and gripped my hand.

"One day soon," he said, "England and the Third Reich will be at war. But you will not be at war with Germany. Remember that, please, Herr Doktor. Not with Germany. It is people like us who are Germany, and in our way we shall fight with England. You will see."

I left soon after.

At nine that night I was in Zürich.

Llewellyn was back in the room. I put the manuscript down. He looked across at me.

"Very interesting," I said.

"I'd considered sending it up to one of these magazines that publish short stories," he said apologetically. "I thought I'd like your opinion first, though. What do you think?"

I cleared my throat. "Well, of course, it's difficult to say. Very interesting, as I said. But there's no real point to it, is there? It needs something to tie it all together."

"Yes, I see what you mean. It sort of leaves off, doesn't it? But that's how it actually happened." He looked disappointed. "I don't think I could invent an ending. It would be rather a pity, wouldn't it? You see, it's all true."

"Yes, it would be a pity."

"Well, anyway, thanks for reading it. Funny thing to happen. I really only put it down on paper for fun. Have another brandy?" He got up. "Oh, by the way. I was forgetting. I heard from those people about a week after war broke out. A letter. Let's see now, where did I put it? Ah, yes."

He rummaged in a drawer for a bit, and then, tossing a letter over to me, picked up the brandy bottle.

The envelope bore a Swiss stamp and the postmark was Klosters, September 4th, 1939. The contents felt bulky. I drew them out.

The cause of the bulkiness was what looked like a travel agent's folder doubled up to fit the envelope. I straightened it. On the front page was a lino-cut of a clump of pines on the shore of a lake and the word "TITISEE." I opened out the folder.

"GERMAN MEN AND WOMEN, COMRADES!" The type was worn and battered. "Hitler has led you into war. He fed you with lies about the friendly Polish people. In your name he has now committed a wanton act of aggression against them. As a consequence, the free democracies of England and France have declared war against Germany. Comrades, right and justice are on their side. It is Hitler and National Socialism

who are the enemies of peace in Europe. Our place as true Germans is at the side of the democracies against Hitler, against National Socialism. Hitler cannot win this war. But the people of Germany must act. All Germans, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, must act now. Our Czech and Slovak friends are already refusing to make guns for Hitler. Let us stand by their sides. Remember . . ."

I was about to read on when I saw that the letter which accompanied the folder had fluttered to the carpet. I picked it up. It consisted of a few typewritten lines on an otherwise blank sheet of paper.

"Greetings, Herr Doktor. We secured your address from the Customs carnet in your car and write now to wish you good luck. Kurt, Stephan, and Bruno have made many journeys since we saw you and returned safely each time. Today, Kurt leaves again. We pray for him as always. With this letter we send you Johann's newest work so that you shall see that Kurt spoke the truth to you. We are of the army of the shadows. We do not fight for you against our countrymen; but we fight with you against National Socialism, our common enemy.

"Auf Wiedersehen.

"FREDA, KURT, STEPHAN, JOHANN, AND BRUNO."

Llewellyn put my glass down on the table beside me. "Help yourself to a cigarette. What do you think of that? Nice of them, wasn't it?" he added. "Sentimental lot, these Germans."

WILLIAM C. WHITE

It is a pleasure to be able to include William C. White's remarkable spy story, *Career*, in this collection. One of the most factual and realistic stories of espionage that I have read, it may stand without apology beside the fine performance of Somerset Maugham in the same field of romantic realism. In *Mrs. MacLaird*, Mr. White has given us a fictional figure—not altogether imaginary, one suspects—who is the epitome of the living and working secret agent, the female spy as she exists outside the pages of a sentimental novel. If her activities seem trivial beside the fantastic machinations of the great spies of romance, her dangers are no less harrowing; they are all the more terrible for our certainty that they are actual and imminent. *Mrs. MacLaird*, no mediocrity, is typical of the small but important unit in the vast system of espionage, whose contributions help to fill out the jigsaw puzzle constantly being pieced together by those whose duty it is to make the final decisions. In this story as in no other in the book, we understand the sense of futility that sometimes grips a sensitive member of the profession; we know the deadly fear that dwells always at his side.

CAREER

SLONENSTRASSE, in the Wilmersdorf district, seems far from the Berlin of politics and foreign affairs. Here are rows of modern apartment houses, six stories high, with every window brightened by a box of red geraniums. Here, each morning, the *Hausfrauen* amble along to do their own marketing, exchanging conversation en route about the children, the prices of food, the neighbors. In the afternoon the street is a promenade for baby carriages. At suppertime the husbands come back from the city, laden with brief cases and parcels, passing the same corner, almost the same paving block, at the same minute each evening. In the early evening husbands and wives walk the street leisurely, their pace set to the convenience of the accompanying dachshund. By ten o'clock the street is quiet, except for the distant rumble of the subway, the only reminder that a great city of five millions is twenty minutes away. Everything along the street combines to give an impression of ordered quietness. Everything is so German. No foreign language is ever heard on the street—only the quick speech of the Berliner or the broad German of the Bavarian. Everything is in its place. Even an occasional morning-glory vine in the window boxes looks like a rude outsider.

It was strange, therefore, to see the name opposite the bell for Apartment 3-B in one house. It read, "Frau Malcolm MacLaird." Yet the neighbors in the house had long ago ceased to look on Mrs. MacLaird as a foreigner. She had lived there for four years, coming and going to some office in the city with the same quietness and regularity as the other tenants. She spoke perfect German and never passed a neighbor in the corridors without a punctilious query about the health of little Inge or Adolf. The janitor of the apartment, who watches over such things, reported that, until recent months, she had had no callers, but now a gentleman came several evenings each week, that she never stayed out late, and that his opinion of her was that of the neighbors, "A very *feine Dame!*"

Her apartment, on the third floor rear, had a small living room that opened on a little balcony, a dark dining alcove, a little kitchen, a bath and a tiny bedroom. The furnishings, however, were not in keeping with the modesty of the apartment nor with the salary of a translator in a Berlin office. The chairs were upholstered in soft leather, the carpets had a deep soft nap, the single bed was of some hand-carved dark wood. The dishes in the little sideboard were Dresden china and the glassware was crystal. Everything indicated an owner who liked the best. The quality of the furnishings was not immediately apparent. First glance took in only the overwhelming color contrasts. The carpets and the walls were of neutral shades, but there was nothing else in the rooms that did not have vivid color. Loud scarlets in the leather of the chairs, chromium frames around colorful pastels, intricately patterned curtains, and, throughout, blacks and orange, lavender and green, gave the impression of a woman who wanted to avoid drabness in her surroundings, even if the result seemed at first a trifle startling. First glance would not notice another curious thing: the impersonality of the rooms. There were no photographs, no trinkets, none of the little things that lonely people usually collect and cherish. Everything personal in the apartment, including the clothes in the closet, could have been packed in two suitcases at a moment's notice.

The apartment implied an unusual occupant, yet Mrs. MacLaird seemed to be a conventional woman of thirty-five. Only after some time were you conscious that she had a particularly fine pair of gray eyes that bordered on black, and black hair with unusual luster. Just a few touches—a bit of mascara, a little wave in her hair—would have been necessary to call attention to these and to give her a definite patrician loveliness. Yet she used no make-up and she wore her hair flat, as if trying to avoid anything in her appearance that would express any individuality. Except that she was short, the rest of her appearance was hard to remember, and it was exactly as if she wished it so, to avoid standing out in a group: that was the more strange, considering how easy it

would have been. In her closets hung several finely made English suits, but she never wore them, as if foreign clothes would make her too conspicuous in a Berlin street; instead, she wore ready-made German clothes, and Berlin hats that perched, slumped, or plopped on her head. Walking along Friedrichstrasse to her office, she looked like any one of a thousand women hurrying to work.

Yet her face had something besides fine features in a conventional setting. Usually her face wore no particular expression that implied any response to things around; the light in the eyes and the curve of the lips kept it from being lifeless, but it was relaxed, like something loosened to avoid unnecessary strain or tautness. This relaxed quality, perhaps the outstanding characteristic, gave her face the power to hide whatever was in her mind; and it called attention to what the face could really express. It was the face of a woman, you felt, who could know greater grief than most humans, or greater exaltation; a woman whose emotions could run octaves above or below the average human being's, with the same difference of range that distinguishes an eighty-eight-note piano from one of sixty-six.

The office to which Mrs. MacLaird went every morning at nine was that of an agent for an English factory-equipment firm. In it she was as conscientious and as impersonal as an adding machine. Most of her work was the translation of specifications and sales booklets on machinery, a dull occupation that demanded a knowledge of technical German. She had been sent to the Berlin office by the English firm. None of the other half dozen employees knew her; she had the ability to remain impersonal no matter what the situation. Her immediate superior was a German. On her appearance four years before, he had tried to put things between them on a warmer and closer basis than that of pumps, valves and cylinder heads, but the crackle of her response held him aloof ever after. Sometimes the people in the office wondered what Mrs. MacLaird got from life; lacking, so far as they knew, any avocation or outside interests. She took no part in office conversations about theaters or sports. Once a year she had a two weeks' vacation and always went to England. On her return she never mentioned what she had done and no one questioned her. She was the type one does not question.

The British colony in Berlin knew little more about her. Each year she appeared at the Embassy to pay her respects on the King's birthday; most of the other British subjects did likewise. She knew several of them by sight and chatted with them about trifles in a pleasant voice marked by a heavy Scotch accent. She accepted no invitations from members of the colony and she offered none. There was nothing peculiar about that; every foreign colony has individuals who are only names on the consul's register.

Her name, along with those of all other foreigners resident in Berlin,

was on a folder in the files of the Gestapo, the Secret Police. The folder listed only a few facts about her. She was born in Russia, but was a British subject by marriage. The marriage had ended in a divorce in 1926. She had come to Berlin in 1931. A typical colorless description ended with "Occupation—Translator." The folder was in the file marked "Inactive." That it was there and that it had so few details was an unintended compliment to Mrs. MacLaird.

For a more complete history of her, the Gestapo should have started with the arrival of a Scotchman in Russia in 1850, hired to help build Russia's first railways. His daughter had married a wealthy Russian lawyer and the first child of this marriage was Natalie, now resident in Berlin as Mrs. MacLaird. As a child, she had been sent to Scotland for her education, returning home every summer and thereby continuing her Russian, along with English and a Scotch accent. Tutors in Scotland and visits on the Continent added other languages. In the summer of 1918 she found that she could not return to Russia as usual, for civil war had closed all the frontiers. A girl of eighteen, she accepted the fact stoically until a delayed letter told of the death of her father. She felt that she had to get into Russia somehow, and the only possibility was through the south. When a chance came along to join a Red Cross unit about to leave for Constantinople immediately after the Armistice, she took it. She acted as nurse for a time, always waiting the opportunity to be off for Odessa and Russia. She confided in a British officer, a Colonel Ashham; instead of discouraging her, he seemed enthusiastic and offered her money for the journey. Then offhandedly, he asked a favor. If it were convenient, would she continue from Moscow to Eastern Siberia, where British officers were with Kolchak, and carry messages to them?

She agreed. Dressed as a peasant girl, she got through the Red lines and reached Moscow. Her mother had died, and there was no purpose in remaining there. She turned east, passing through the armies beyond the Volga by forging passes for herself. The risk was great and, once beyond those lines, she found that it was useless; Kolchak had been captured and the British were leaving Siberia. Passing twice more through the Red lines, she returned to Constantinople.

Colonel Ashham thanked her and complimented her, and added that if ever he could be of service, she need only ask. She took up nursing again, but what had once seemed interesting was now leaden dull. Then she met a Captain MacLaird and, after a few months, married him. They returned to England. The first years there were not burdensome; she was a good army officer's wife, thoughtful of his promotion, gay with his superiors and cautious with their wives. Then MacLaird re-

signed from the army, to return to some northern Scotch village to look after his father's property.

In the weeks and months of life in a dour Scotch village, where the only excitement was one more rainstorm, she grew restless. The memory of those weeks in Russia, never far away came back vividly, as if by contrast. She had not noticed it particularly at the time, as she dodged through civil war and revolution, but those weeks and their days were unlike any she had ever known in their continuing excitement. Life seemed so precious, so important, so vital then, because at any moment it might be taken away from her. She could never forget that feeling.

After a year she fled Scotland and returned to London. Her capital was a little money, the knowledge of four or five languages, and the ability to be perfectly English or perfectly Russian and, she suspected, perfect in other European nationalities after a little study. She went to Colonel Ashham and he was glad to see her. The Gestapo would have liked to know that. For some days she spent all her time with neatly tailored men of forty who were amazingly well informed on politics the world over, but who said nothing about their work, except that they were in some government office at Whitehall.

Then Mrs. MacLaird went to Moscow, where she worked for two years in the office of a British lumber agent. Then to Belgrade for two years in a steamship office. Then a year in Rome, in a little bookstore. Then Berlin.

If the Gestapo could have known this history, they would have known what conclusions to draw. Then they would have moved Mrs. MacLaird's folder to the "Active" file, where it would have remained for the very short time until it was marked "Closed."

No day in Mrs. MacLaird's week had the meaning that Friday had. Other days merged together like a stream of time, but each minute of Friday had its own identity.

On a Friday last September she awoke, as usual, at seven, and almost before a conscious thought had taken shape in her mind, she felt the usual tenseness slipping over her. It was not a nervous tenseness—she was as calm as ever—but a tightening of everything within her, so that each individual impression came as clear as the drop of water in a still room. She felt acutely alive. It was as if some master peg that controlled all her senses had been tightened, to make them high-pitched, giving them sharper tone.

On these mornings she dressed with care, even though she wore the same sort of tasteless dress and hat as the day before. She breakfasted on tea and scones which she had made herself, and she seemed to linger over her breakfast. With that finished, she dawdled about before leav-

ing the apartment, almost as if she were looking for reasons not to leave. A picture frame had to be straightened ever so little. Dishes had to be rearranged in the cabinet. The flowers on the veranda rail had to be watered with great care. This was always the first difficult moment of these Fridays, and it came not from the fear of going but from the worry lest this be the last time she would see these rooms. She finished by dusting the books, although they had been dusted the day before, and her flick of the cloth at them was like an informal good-by.

Once on the street, her hesitancy usually left her. She walked to the subway, keenly conscious of the fresh morning air, of the odor of green things, of the rattle of a cart, the voices of passers-by. Seated in the subway on the other mornings of the week, she was one among the many passengers. On this Friday as on all Fridays, she was one against all of them. Any one of them—that quiet prosperous-looking man in the corner, that tight-lipped middle-aged woman across the way—might be the agent eventually assigned to her.

From that feeling of one against the world came a sense of exaltation that created a consciousness of strength, making the drabness of the rest of the week unimportant. That feeling mounted steadily, without once ebbing during the day.

At the Friedrichstrasse station near Unter den Linden she left the subway. Her office was ten blocks away, but the walk was part of these Friday routines. After a few blocks she entered a telephone booth, remembering not to use the one used the week previous. She called the number of a café in the West End, and when an attendant answered, she asked for a Herr Froelich. It took only a second to arrange an appointment for the usual time in the late afternoon at a café on Mehrin-strasse, which neither of them named. To anyone listening, the conversation might have sounded like the hurried arrangement for an illicit meeting.

Then she walked briskly to the office. Never the same telephone, never the same café in the same month. One could not be too careful! She smiled at the thought that all these arrangements had been planned originally by herself and that so far they were flawless. So far —

She went about her routine work in the office in a manner no different from that of any other day, but a close observer might have noticed that she frequently looked at the time. A few minutes before five she packed some papers into a brief case, and promptly at five she was out of the office and seated on a bus for the West End. She was vibrant now with the feeling of something about to begin; her face showed it. Although there was no need for caution until she was seated in the appointed café, she had felt uneasy on starting out the past few Fridays. Not until a few months ago had she ever thought seriously of detection; life in Moscow, in Belgrade and in Rome had hardened her, but it was

the hardness of metal, not of callous. The possibility of detection was always present, of course, but until a few months ago it had not seemed any more real than dust motes in a light beam. She knew why this mold of uneasiness that spoiled her keen pleasure had come. It angered her rather than frightened her.

She rode inside the bus, reading an evening paper, like any one of the ten thousand office workers returning home. She left the bus at the Gedächtnis Kirche and started to walk down Kurfürstendamm to Mehrinstrasse. As always, she pictured what ought to be awaiting her there; this habit was in the nature of a rehearsal. As always, during recent months, another thought slipped by—the thought of what might await her. Someday, no matter how perfect the arrangements, there might be a trap, and this might be the day. Yet, in spite of that uncertain fear, these minutes brought a sense of renewed self-confidence. Five hundred more steps, then a hundred, then fifty, then five, and she might be face to face with the end. Everything she had ever done, ever learned, ever known, would have come to her aid then, in one instinctive rush. It is not given to every human being to keep an appointment with possible death regularly on every Friday at 5:30. And nothing ever touched Natalie MacLaird, neither men nor music nor starlight nor the softness of heather fields, as these afternoons did. Her life seemed now to have a purpose, and weekly repetition of the experience, instead of dulling the thrill, only heightened it, increasingly, each time.

The café was in front of her, but she hesitated before entering. At this moment, always her mind played a trick. It pretended that two choices lay before her: One, to walk past, and thereby to avoid whatever might await her within; the other, to enter. For a moment she thought of the first choice; this afternoon it seemed more attractive than ever before. She could walk by—that is, she was physically able to walk by—she could get to a bus, then to a subway, then home. Then the fear of following footsteps that played on nerves like cold needles would be gone forever. No compulsion, no thongs bound to her, forced her to go through that doorway.

There was the first choice. Having considered it, she entered.

She saw Froelich at once, seated toward the rear, reading a newspaper. He was an undistinguished-looking man of fifty. She sat down at a near-by table. A waiter came and she ordered coffee, in louder voice than necessary. Her voice aroused Froelich; he looked at her for a second from behind his paper, without any sign of recognition, then settled back in his chair. Mrs. MacLaird waited for the next step, a sign from him that he had been followed. If he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, it was a warning to her to be on guard. The minutes passed and he made no such move.

Then Mrs. MacLaird began to divide her interest between her news-

paper and the café. A glance at the paper, then a glance around the room, a glance at the paper — She saw every person in the room in high-lighted bas-relief; the couple at the next table, holding hands; the elderly man a little way off, looking vacantly into space, as if worried about the rent. She saw the faces of the waiters, the men in the orchestra; it was curious that after these Fridays, each face remained vivid in her mind for days. Nowhere could she notice anyone looking at her even casually. Everything was at it should be.

She saw Froelich look at her, and as if it were a signal, she pushed her coffee aside. Anyone watching them would have seen a series of incidents follow which could not possibly have been cause and effect. Froelich called the waiter and paid his check. Casually, he asked where the telephone was. The waiter pointed to the booth at the end of the room. With no haste, he walked to it. After five minutes, Mrs. MacLaird rose, leaving her brief case at her chair, and went to the booth. Froelich passed her. She entered the booth and shut the door. That was all that anyone watching would have seen.

On the floor of the booth she found a thick envelope. She stooped, picked it up and put it in her bosom. Then she called the Adlon Hotel and asked for any fanciful name that came to mind. The hotel regretted that no such person was there. The few seconds during that call gave her the reassurance to begin the first of the more difficult moments: to return to her place with that envelope in her possession. She walked away from the booth slowly. All the acuteness of the past minutes seemed out of focus compared to the acuteness now, the hyperconsciousness of every little thing that happened around her—the passing of a waiter, the clink of change in his pocket, the voice of the cigarette girl and of her slippers on the carpet, the sound of a glass set down at some table. She came back to her chair. In the past, these moments had been the most exciting in the whole experience. Now slight fear dulled them. She wanted to hurry away, but she dare not.

With awkward nonchalance, she finished her coffee, then paid her check. She took her brief case and went to the door, her heart beating fast. This was the second of the difficulties—getting to the street. She looked back once to be sure that no one else in the café was rising and walking after her. That had happened several times in the past, as coincidence, but each time they had turned one way on the street and she another. This time no one was following, but that did not mean that there was no one waiting outside for her to appear. All these Berlin cafés, she regretted, had windows or fronts that made it easy for outsiders to look in—as if to show passers-by the view of the pleasant interior.

It was difficult to keep from hurrying now, but with deliberate carelessness she walked to the corner and signaled a cab. As soon as she was

seated, she turned to see if any cab was following. There was none in sight. Telling the driver to go to Potsdamer Platz, she removed the envelope and put it in the brief case. As the cab went along, she turned frequently to look behind. She saw nothing alarming. At Potsdamer Platz she got out and mingled in the crowd on the sidewalk; that was one reason for setting these appointments in the late afternoon, when it was easy to get lost in crowds if it became necessary. After walking a few blocks, she got into another cab and rode back to Kurfürstendamm, occasionally watching for any pursuers.

In the brief case lay the envelope that could drag her to a board of inquiry at the Gestapo and God knew what after that. These were the moments that made all of life to that second a unit, the moments when she needed all her wits, all her experience for the one duty—to get that envelope out of her possession. Almost never did she know what was in the envelope; that was not part of her work. Hers was to take it from the man who had secured it to the person who would see that it got abroad. Any well-organized espionage system must have such middle people. If the ends of a system meet and one is caught, the thread almost always leads to the other. They are hard to replace; middle people can always be had.

At Kurfürstendamm Mrs. MacLaird left the cab and walked two blocks down a tree-lined street. Each step along was like the moving of a play to climax. Ten minutes, five minutes, one minute, and the envelope would be out of her possession and she would have done it again. Yet these last moments were uneasy too. No one could possibly be following her, yet she heard footsteps behind. She turned around, with effort, and saw some good citizen hurrying past her, to home. She walked faster.

Before an apartment house, in the shadow of trees, she saw a small automobile, and she wanted to shout. All these arrangements depended on timing; they had never gone wrong yet, but that was no guarantee that they would not, or that, instead of an Englishman in the car, she would find several hard-faced Germans waiting. She walked past the car, with only the slightest glance toward it. At the wheel she saw the man whom she knew as Harry, and like some warm wave of chiffon-soft water, she felt herself relax. What would follow after this, what always followed—the sudden bottomless fatigue, the complete weariness—would be, as always, welcome. Again she had walked with danger; again she was safe.

She went by the car and heard it start after her. She walked slowly for another hundred feet, angling toward the curb. The car came up, scarce stopping, the door was opened, and she was in, while Harry shifted gears rapidly and started speedily down the street. To any observer, it would have looked like a casual pickup.

"Here," she said, as if no other words were possible. She handed him the envelope.

"Good work, Nalya." He always called her by her Russian nickname.

"I'm glad I'm here," she said, sinking in the seat.

"Any trouble?"

"None."

That was all that was ever said. Then, usually, they drove to some side street, where she got out and hurried to a cab and to home and a warm bath and bed. This evening she asked, "I'd like to talk with you. Have you time?"

"The whole evening, if you'll let me get rid of this first."

She watched him, in silence, as he drove. He was a big man, in his forties, big in face, in hands, in body. Even at the sedentary work of driving, he gave the impression of tremendous irresistible energy, like a mountain on the move. She knew little about him, except that he worked in some office, that he was a native Englishman, and that he seemingly had no nerves. She never saw him from one Friday to the next.

"Something wrong, Nalya?" he asked suddenly, as if to take her by surprise.

She nodded. "I was worried all to-day, more than usual."

He did not chide her nor sympathize. He nodded, knowingly, "It's becoming difficult. Before Hitler came to power, life was simple here. They got Brunner this week, right at his desk in the Defense Ministry. It will be difficult to replace him."

She did not know Brunner. She knew none of the individuals who supplied the information which Froelich collected for her, but she felt a tremor at the thought of detection.

"Those things happen," Harry continued, "and they happen in waves. Sometimes months go by and this business is as calm as dairy farming. Then, other times —"

"Why do you never get uneasy?" Nalya asked suddenly. She had wanted to ask the question for a long time.

As if discussing the weather, he answered colorlessly, "Detection is one of the risks of our trade. All human beings face disaster daily from germs, from taxicabs, from slippery streets and things thrown out of windows. Detection, for us, is just another menace added to life."

That had been her own point of view until a few months ago.

Harry drove a short distance, then stopped at an apartment. "You wait here," he said. He was gone five minutes. On his return he was smiling, seeming to relax for the first time. He drove off, then asked, gently, "Why are you worried, Nalya? Nerves?"

She shook her head. "It's a matter of heart, not nerves," she paused. "I think I've fallen in love."

For a moment he took his eyes from the road, turned and looked at her. Then, quietly, he said, "I understand. I did, too, once."

"And —"

"And the thought of what would happen to her if they took me —"

"That's what's worried me," Nalya confessed. She had wondered how she could ever begin this conversation. Now, begun, it seemed easy, and she continued, "On my way back from vacation in England three months ago, I met a German, a Hans Linge. He's a newspaperman."

"Sure he's nothing else?" Harry asked ominously.

"Practically sure. The only things that seem to interest him are the English language, which I'm teaching him, his writing, and me."

"Go on." It was in the tone of an order.

"He asked me to marry him. I told him I couldn't decide at once."

"Does he have any money?"

"He's a newspaperman, I said." Then she added, "Even if we married, I'd have to go on working at the office."

Harry seemed to consider that. Then, paternally, "Tell me more about him. What sort of background does he have?"

She smiled. "Not very much, I'm afraid. He's just a big healthy animal of good peasant stock."

"He sounds like the type for you." Harry stayed close to his own thoughts for some minutes. "You left a marriage to get into this work, didn't you?"

Nalya nodded. "Not every marriage need be as boring as my first one."

"You like what outsiders would call the excitement of this business?"

She nodded, almost regretfully "For these years I've lived on it."

"You might miss it in marriage." In the same paternal tone he added, "If you married a German, you would have to give this work up."

She understood. "I've thought about that. But if I decide not to marry him, I must give some excuse and break off everything at once. I can't continue to see him. If they caught me, they'd go after any Germans I knew, as a matter of course. I wouldn't want that to happen to him."

Harry nodded. "If you decide to break things off, I could have you transferred from Berlin, although, frankly, I'd hate to lose you."

She had thought of that, too, but that did not aid in a decision. Feebly, she asked, "What shall I do about him, Harry?"

Harry drove on in silence. "I don't know what to advise." Suddenly, as if angered deeply by his own remark, he broke out, "Of course, I know. Get out of this while you have a chance. Why should any normal woman want to take the risks we take? I'm too old to get out; I've been in the game too long. You haven't. Forget it! Get up to the surface of life where everything is in the open for you. You're only living a lie

now, and that lie comes up and surrounds you at times when you don't want it to and spoils a lot of things you care for." His voice was no louder, but its intensity deepened: "What kind of a career is this for you? There's my advice, and I'm talking against my own interests. You will be devilishly hard to replace."

"Thanks, Harry." She was grateful at hearing what she wanted to hear.

Then, with unexpected amusement, Harry commented, "I suspect my superiors in London would be shocked at that advice. I should have talked to you about patriotic duty and waved the flag and mentioned the glamour! Duty at nineteen pounds a month—that's what you get, isn't it?" The sense of amusement left his voice. "And glamour? This business is as glamorous as shoplifting!" He slipped to curtness, as if it were a shield. "Is that all? I must get back, if it is."

"That's all," Nalya said weakly. "Thank you. I'll try to decide within a week."

"Very well." Again he considered his own thoughts. "That's my advice," he said quietly, almost to himself, "but if you want my guess, I'll wager you won't take it." Slowly, and with emphasis, he added, "Not because you don't want to, mind you, but because this business has a way of not letting you."

On Sunday morning she was up early and went about her housework singing. With almost girlish pride, she laid out one of the tweed suits and hat and shoes to match. Then she took from the rear of a lower drawer a locked tin box which she called her "emergency cabinet." It held cosmetics, but many more than most women use; it was a complete theatrical make-up box. In its bottom under crayons and creams, were three passports, English, German and Russian, kept up to date.

She sat before the mirror. When she finished, she did not look like the colorless woman who sat over a typewriter eight hours a day, and there was light in her face and in her eyes that no make-up could have added. Everything was put away a half hour later when her bell rang and Hans came in.

He was exuberant, excited, and filled the small apartment with a sense of happy possession, like an overgrown sheep dog. In his middle thirties, tall, with brown hair and blue eyes, he had the air of a man fond of life and showed it in his laughter, his stride, his vigorous gestures. There was nothing studied about them, nor about his clothes.

"It's been long since I've seen you, Nalya," he smiled.

"Three days," she said, laughing. It seemed to her that she had never laughed until she met him, or known the kind of carefree gaiety he could arouse. There was a freshness and a boyishness about him that she loved. His boyishness had first attracted her to him; she had seen

him first in an argument on the dock at Harwich with a passport inspector, and she had been amused at his vigorous refusal to let an interpreter help him, until he had thumbed painstakingly through a pocket dictionary and found the words that would explain everything.

"Ready to go?" He always spoke impetuously. "Today we shall drive around Wannsee and have lunch at a lakeside place. Does that sound nice?"

"I shall love it."

They drove along, and for a time both felt that the silence bore their feelings as well as any words could do. The autumn morning was brown and silver.

"You look so lovely," he said suddenly, as if he had just noticed her appearance. "I don't see why you don't look like that during the week."

She had not known that he was so observant. She smiled, "Better not to look too attractive in an office."

He laughed heartily, and she joined it, as if all the wit for all time were in her answer.

She could feel carefree at times like this, but she knew that back in her mind lay her conversation with Harry. It would be so easy now to put out her hand and touch Hans' arm and to say, "Yes, Hans, yes." That would be all, and the shadows that walked with her on Fridays would be gone forever. It would be easy, yet a dozen restraining reasons tugged at her: It was unfair to let Harry down until he had made arrangements to replace her; it was unwise to marry a man she had known for such a short time—she had made that mistake once before. Yet she felt that these reasons and their companions only served to mask some one deeper reason. As if to taunt herself, she did reach out and touch his arm.

"Yes, dear?"

It was a kind of self-torture. "It's very lovely scenery, isn't it?" she said limply.

They drove through the outskirts of Berlin and had lunch at a little lakeside restaurant that was as lovely as Hans had promised. In the late afternoon they turned back.

"Do you know where we're going now?" he smiled. "Every respectable middle-class Berliner loves a beer garden."

They drove to a place by the shores of the river in Treptow. At tables under the trees were the respectable Berliners, mammas, papas and children. A band, in a ridiculous overdecorated pavilion, was playing what sounded like a timid accompaniment to the oompah, oompah of a huge bass horn. Out on the river were boats and a breeze, but in the garden everything seemed overdressed and hot, like perspiration running down a stiff collar.

"Gemütlich, isn't it?" Hans smiled. He seemed more pleased and

happier than ever. "My father used to bring me here every Sunday when I was a child. I love it."

Something like a twitch ran through Nalya at the thought of every Sunday here.

He leaned closer. "Have you decided yet, *Liebchen*?"

"Not yet," she said, with a wistful smile. Deep within her went the conviction that it was better to say "no" now. She would not like the *gemütlich* life, and he would be disappointed. There was the real reason for all her hesitation! Yet, if she said no, she would have to break off with him at once; that knowledge blocked her decision.

"You look worried," Hans said. With strained casualness he asked, "Is there someone else?"

"Why do you ask that?"

She hoped she did not show in her face what ran through her mind as she heard him say, "I've noticed that you're always busy when I ask you to go somewhere on Fridays."

"I told you, I go to the hairdresser's then."

She hoped she had put into the remark the sincerity she wanted. She was annoyed at him, for the first time, for forcing her to repeat a lie. But, with a confusion that was new to her, she found herself wondering what else he had noticed.

He seemed to want to drop the matter, and she did not dare continue it. As he searched for some change of subject, he pointed to a large family picnic at a near-by table, where husband and wife and relatives and children were surrounding platters of *Bratwurst*, *Blutwurst*, *Thüringerwurst*, *Knackwurst*, and *Kartoffelsalat*. "There!" he pointed. He came close and whispered, "You and I."

"I want to, Hans," she said, "but I can't say 'yes' yet. I want to!"

Dumfounded at the sound of her own voice, she hoped it sounded more convincing to him than it did to her.

She left the office at five on the following Friday. This time the usual appointment was in a café off Wilhelm Platz. She hurried there, as if eager to have it over with. Slowly, during the week, fear had entered to calcify the usual sense of excitement. She was not only going into danger herself but, indirectly, she was taking Hans with her.

At the café, as usual, she saw Froelich reading his newspaper. She took a table near him and, as usual, signaled. She had a feeling that he was watching nervously for her and that a signal was unnecessary. She opened her newspaper as a preliminary to examining the room. Then, in rising horror, she saw him slowly take out his handkerchief and wipe his forehead. That meant one thing—that he believed that he had been followed to the café and that she should be careful. In horror that was becoming panic, she looked around the room. She saw the usual num-

ber of couples, the usual number of single men, all occupied with their newspapers, their drinks, or their thoughts. After ten minutes of observation, she could not detect anyone watching her. Yet the agent might be outside the café; there were large windows on the street. There was no way of knowing. Under the circumstances, she could not speak to Froelich, but she looked at him and saw the fear in his eyes. To reassure herself, she tried to believe that he was probably suffering from the hysteria that the recent arrest of Brunner and other agents had brought on. A look at his face again, and she knew that was fantasy. His fear was as real as pain.

There was no point in prolonging the torture. She signaled with her coffee cup that she was ready.

He called the waiter and paid his check, and she saw him start to the telephone booth. At that moment she saw one of the single men not far away rise and walk slowly toward the door. She watched, in paralyzing pain. Ordinarily, the incident would have no meaning; now it meant everything. And her pain spurted and raged through her when she suddenly remembered that in a few minutes she had to follow to that booth, if it was the last physical movement she ever made. She saw the suspected agent walk to the door and wait there. She knew she could not come back to the table with that envelope, so she put down several marks for her bill and took her brief case. The moment she had always feared had come, and it was far worse than she had ever imagined.

She rose from her chair. Nothing was very clear now; she knew only that the booth was twenty feet away. From another table she saw a man rise and follow slowly after her. That was all coincidence, she kept repeating; in a saner mood, it would have seemed trivial. As she came near the booth, she saw Froelich's face behind the glass door, almost pleading with her to hurry. He stepped out and she thought she heard him mutter, "*Gluck auf*"—"Good luck." That terrified her more than the sight of the men following.

She was in the booth, and she found the envelope and put it in her bosom. There was no time to waste now on a fake telephone call. She had to leave that booth, but for a moment it seemed impossible. She tried to reach for calmness, but it was like reaching for a breeze. Then she thought of Hans and of the effect of her arrest on him. For herself, she knew it was impossible to get past that door and into the street; for him, it might be possible. She turned around, ready to leave.

There at the door, two men had stopped Froelich. One of them was feeling down his coat, paying attention to the pockets. Several waiters were hovering about nervously and there was slow, rising confusion. Then she saw Froelich suddenly break away and dash to the street. He had made the opportunity for her.

She hurried from the booth and got to the street in the midst of the confusion. She knew there were men's voices at the corner and she guessed that Froelich had gone in that direction. As a cab came by, going in the opposite direction, she got to it and begged the driver to go fast, anywhere. There were cries now, from the corner, "Where's the woman?"

She reached over to the driver with a ten-mark note. "Please hurry." Then, for the first time, she looked back. A cab was leaving the curb and starting after her, and behind it she thought she saw a second cab. Traffic was favorable for her, and her driver gained a little advantage.

"Turn the next corner," she called. Her cab turned sharply. A hundred yards behind, another cab made the turn. And a hundred yards behind it came a second one.

There was no time to transfer the envelope from her bosom to the brief case; there was scarce time for a decision to leave the cab and to chance the streets.

"Stop here," she called, and a second later she was out and on the sidewalk. Passers-by noticed her, but no one stopped her, and she ran into an office building, praying that it went through the block. She reached the end of a long corridor. There were footsteps behind her, the kind of pounding footsteps she had always dreaded. Then she heard a voice:

"Nalya!"

It was Hans.

In five minutes they had got through the back door to a side street and were in a cab driving toward Kurfürstendamm. No one was following them now. Hans' face was black with anger, and he was waiting an answer to a question. Nalya was crying softly, unable to answer.

Hans was blunt: "Either you tell me why you were being followed or I shall take you to men who can make you tell. I watched you go from your office to the café because I didn't believe you about the hairdresser. I waited outside." For a moment, his tone lightened. "I felt so glad when I saw you there alone. I was about to join you, then I saw men running and I heard something about 'Follow that woman.' Then a cab followed me." He let her consider his remarks for a moment. Then, coldly, he whipped the question, "Are you a spy?"

She flinched. Her answer could push aside all that had kept her apart from him before. And her answer might drive him from her forever. So strong was his anger that he might even think it his duty to take her to the police.

"Well?"

She felt that she must appeal to him in some way, and she remem-

bered his sympathy and his gentleness. Once, long ago, she had imagined her own arrest and her trial. Idly, she wondered what she would do then, and she had prepared a fantastic story that might get some mercy from the court. She decided to tell it now, to the man she loved, and then hope. It would be worse than telling it to a court; there, lies did not matter, but here — What was it Harry had said about living a lie and having it surround you at times?

She managed to stop crying, feeling deeply the importance of what she was about to say. "You must believe me, Hans," she began slowly. "I was forced in to this work. Once, in Constantinople, I did something for the British and they knew I was valuable to them." She began to cry again. "When I left my husband, I was told that either I had to work for them or they would take my passport away when it expired. I was only a British subject by marriage. That meant going back to Russia for a Soviet passport and, perhaps, never getting out of there again. I've hated this work, this deception."

Waiting for his reaction was worse than awaiting the death sentence. It was too dark in the cab to see his face and he said nothing. Then she felt his arm go slowly around her, and she felt him draw her to him, and the sudden warmth of his voice ran through her:

"Do you love me, Nalya?"

"Yes, Hans, I do."

"You poor child!" It seemed to her that he was talking from afar off now, yet at the same time whispering close. "Why didn't you tell me sooner? If you marry me, you will need worry no more about passports. You will be my wife then, on my passport."

She began to cry once more, but not from worry. For minutes neither said a word. Then a thought checked her rising happiness. "It will not be safe for me to live in Berlin."

Firmly he said, "I'll ask my office for a transfer to London. If they refuse, we'll go anyway. I'll find something to do."

There was deeper strength and gentleness in him than she had guessed. She felt a peace and a relief that she had never known before. For the first time in years, it seemed, she had stepped into the light and it was bright and warm.

"We must hurry," she said. "If they caught Froelich, they may find me."

"The man they were chasing?" Hans said. "I think he got away. I can be ready in two or three days, but you can leave tonight if you wish."

The envelope still had to be delivered to Harry, and she did not want to leave without Hans. "I'll wait for you," she smiled. "I'm sure they will be unable to trace me. But for your sake we must not marry until we reach London."

She got the envelope to Harry the following morning and told him of her decision.

"I'm glad you've made it," he said. "This business lets few of us out."

She went back to the apartment, thankful that she had carried her last envelope. She knew now that at the bottom of her refusal to make a decision about Hans—so long ago it seemed, but it was only yesterday—lay a real liking for the work. Now it seemed horrible to her.

During the morning she packed her few belongings and arranged to sell the apartment furniture to a dealer. Then she called her office and resigned, giving no explanation. Proudly, she wore her English clothes now. They were the best disguise, she decided, amused. The Gestapo would be hunting a colorless German woman. Proudly, that night, she sat at dinner with Hans.

"My office refused to transfer me, so I resigned," he said without concern. "Don't worry."

"Worry? I've never been happier in my life. I have some money saved, you know." Then, timidly, she asked, "How are you fixed for money?"

He hesitated. "I'm somewhat short."

She offered him the money from the furniture. "Use this for tickets and expenses." She realized anew that they would be together from now on in everything.

They set their departure for Monday evening.

At five o'clock on Monday, Hans came to her apartment to help her with her baggage. Their train left at eight and she had been counting the hours.

"It's strange," she said, as she looked around the apartment, "but I once thought I could never leave here. Now I can't wait."

"I know." He was always awkward in moments like this, and she loved him for it. "Is everything packed?"

She nodded.

Then her doorbell rang. Instinctively, she leaped into Hans' arms. "Oh, God, I've been afraid that bell would ring!" Her face showed what was in her mind.

Hans tried to calm her: "It may be only a peddler."

The bell rang a second time, longer, louder. Then there was knocking.

"I'll answer it," Nalya said. Before he could restrain her, she was at the entrance. She took the handle as if it would spring a gallows trap, and slowly opened the door.

A drab-looking woman was waiting. "Frau MacLaird? I am the wife of Froelich—you know." She seemed about to faint, and Nalya led her in. The woman slumped into a chair and began to weep, beyond con-

trol. Now and then, Nalya caught a sentence: "My poor husband; they just arrested him!" Then, again, the uncontrollable flood of tears.

A thought flashed. "You're sure you weren't followed here?"

"Nein, nein! Who would follow an old woman? I told my husband that he shouldn't do that work. It takes your nerves and your soul and your life." Again tears choked off her words.

Nalya turned to Hans helplessly. "I can imagine how she feels."

The woman struggled to talk clearly for a moment. "My husband said you should warn your employer. That's why I came." Then, with a rattle in her throat, she fainted.

Hans brought water and they revived her. All the while Nalya saw one last decision before her. She considered it for a moment, then turned to Hans. "I must go warn Harry."

"But our train—in two hours!"

"I'll be back in less than an hour."

Hans looked worried. "Please don't, Nalya. It may be dangerous. You're through with all that."

"Harry must know," she said simply, not clear in her own mind about her insistence.

"I'll go with you."

"Oh, no, no," she said hurriedly, with a shudder. "I'll be all right." She tried to reassure him with a smile. "It's the last time I shall ever have to go anywhere alone. You wait here with Mrs. Froelich." The woman lay still in a chair, breathing weakly. "Take care of her. I'll be back in an hour."

An hour later she entered her house, smiling. The journey had been pointless—Harry had his informants in the Gestapo, and he already knew of Froelich's arrest. At least, she told herself, she had had the courage to go through with it, and that pleased her. Now nothing stood between her and Hans and the train, and all that that meant. She ran up the stairs to her apartment.

She felt her breath come short for a moment when she entered and found the rooms vacant. Then she saw a note on the table: "Have taken Mrs. Froelich home. Back in a half hour." She was pleased as she read Hans' writing. He was always thoughtful, kind, gentle. Then the thought that they might be watching Froelich's house came unbidden, and she began to worry helplessly.

At seven, Hans had not returned. She went down to the street and walked to the corner. There was no sign of him. By eight she was frantic, and her helplessness increased when she realized that there was nowhere she could telephone, no one she could ask. She did not even know where Froelich lived. She thought of accidents in taxicabs, acci-

dents in subways, accidents in corridors—anything to keep from thinking of what she really feared. Here was fear worse than she had ever known—fear that came down like a landslide. A dozen times she ran to the street. The sound of a neighborhood clock striking nine, then ten, drove her back.

She heard train whistles, loud mocking whistles of trains gone forever. The click of rolling wheels grew louder and louder. Then she collapsed on one of the scarlet leather chairs. The light from the street danced on one of the chromium picture frames.

She was startled by the ringing of the bell. "Hans!" she called, and she ran to the door, noticing dully that there was a faint morning light in the sky.

She opened the door and saw Harry. His face told her even more than she had dared to fear.

"Hans?" she asked weakly.

Harry nodded gravely. "I came to tell you. They were watching Froelich's house, looking for our middle man. They took Hans."

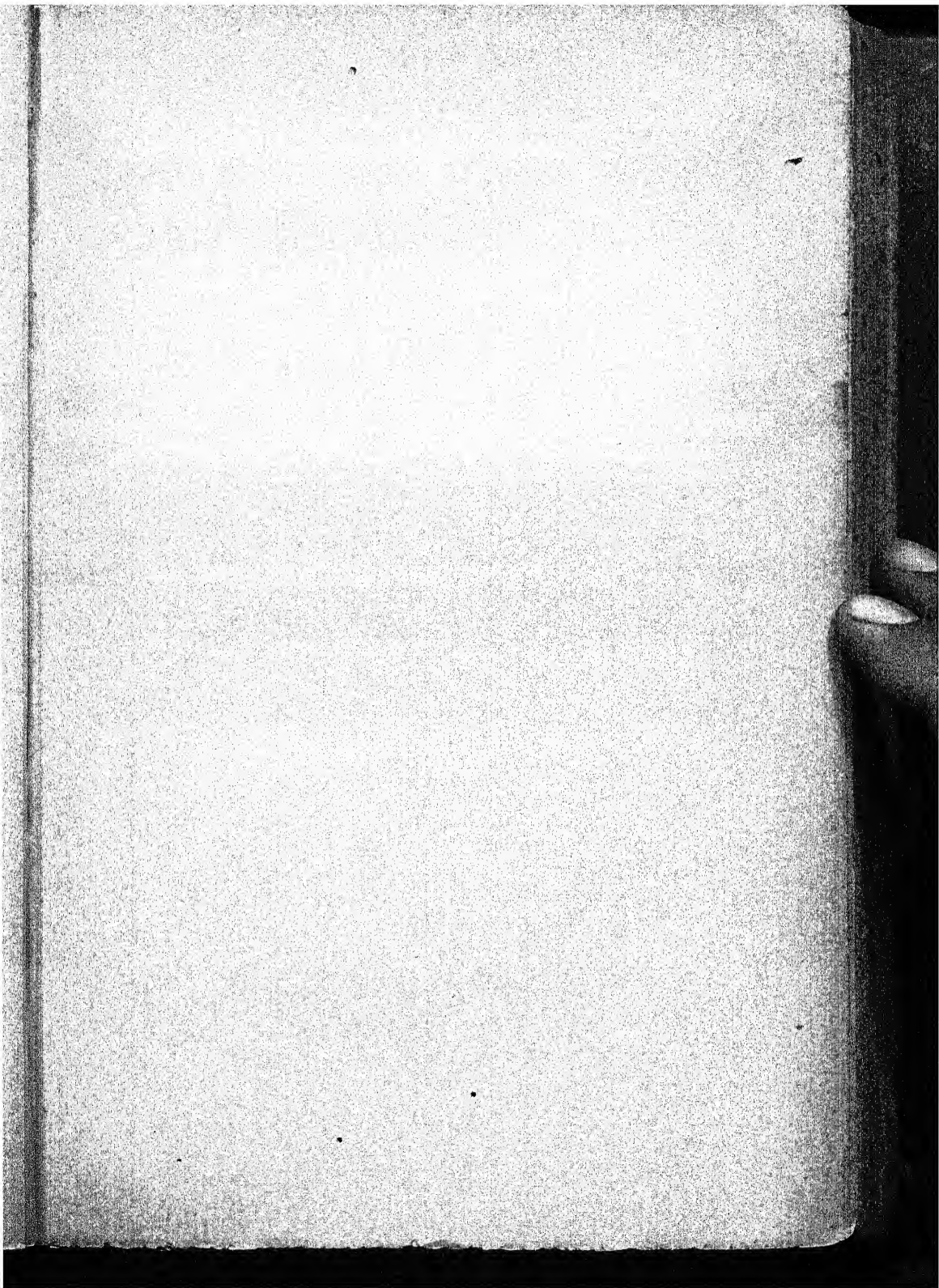
"But —" She heard her voice from far away. "That's ridiculous!"

"Circumstantial evidence," Harry said gently. "Brace up, my dear. Where did he get the money they found on him? Why did he suddenly ask for a transfer to England? Why did he plan to go anyway, after it was refused, unless he was running away from things? Where did he meet Froelich's wife? If he knew anything about espionage, why didn't he report it as a loyal citizen?"

She heard the words, but they took little meaning in her mind.

"That's the deepest hell of this business," Harry said sadly. "It so seldom lets you go."

Nalya nodded listlessly, then bit her lips and began to cry. She knew now that there would never be any escape.



PEARL S. BUCK

Although an American—she was born in West Virginia—Pearl Buck can not escape identification with China. She knows and loves the Chinese and her presentation of the Chinese scene is realistic and inimitable. *A Man's Foes* is one of her best short stories, a simple and unpretentious tale but filled with unforgettable pictures of life in the patriotic army of our gallant ally. It is a story of China united, the old and the new standing resolute and undivided against the onslaught of Japanese arms. It is a story that will stir you to greater sympathy for the terrifying new age that, in our time, has come to ancient China, and to greater admiration for the deathless Chinese people. Mrs. Buck is one of the most admired of contemporary American authors. She knows China at first hand and writes with the intimacy and understanding of a native. Her most famous book, *The Good Earth*, won her the Pulitzer Prize, became a successful motion picture, and, with her subsequent work, led to her becoming the Nobel Prizewinner in Literature, in 1938.

A MAN'S FOES

MARTIN LIU was bewildered as he stepped out of the train at the railroad station in Peking. Nothing was changed, it was exactly as he had remembered it for the seven years he had been abroad. But he had so long looked forward to this moment of homecoming that now it was come it was unreal.

He stood, looking about him, and at that instant saw Wang Ting, his father's chief secretary, and his own sister Siu-li. They were looking in the crowd for him and he now saw them first. He shouted and Siu-li saw him and waved a gay pink handkerchief. She came toward him eagerly, the elderly secretary following her. Martin had not seen this twin sister of his all these years. He had thought of her much and though he had seen many pictures of her he was not quite prepared for this extremely pretty and poised young woman who put out her hand.

"Elder Brother!" she cried in a soft voice. He was older than she by two hours.

"Is this you, Siu-li?" he inquired, unbelieving.

"It is no other, certainly," she replied, smiling. "But here's Wang Ting, too."

Wang Ting came bowing and Martin bowed. He remembered with affection this man who had stood as his father's deputy as long as he could remember. That Wang Ting was here now meant that his father was not. He was disappointed, though he had known his father might not come to meet him. Still, after seven years, and he an only son—

"Is Father well?" he asked Siu-li.

He noticed the smallest of hesitations before she answered.

"Yes, he is well. Today it happens he has important business or he would have come."

Wang Ting cleared his throat. "Your father sent every message of welcome by me," he said solemnly. "And he says he hopes you will not delay. There are guests invited for a feast at seven, and it is now nearly half past five. You will want to rest and he will want a few moments at least with you alone."

Wang Ting stepped back, having done his duty.

"Thank you," Martin said courteously.

"Let's go home quickly," Siu-li said with an unexpected petulance. "Wang Ting, you see to his bags and trunks. We will go on."

Wang Ting bowed and took the checks that Martin handed to him. A few minutes later the brother and sister were sitting side by side in their father's car.

They said nothing for a short while. Each was shy of the other, now that they were alone. Though they were fully aware of their relation, still it remained true that they were a young man and a young woman, strange to each other. Then Martin forgot himself.

"I don't remember this road," he remarked. "I thought we used to go to the right."

"We always did until the Japanese came," Siu-li said. "Now we go this way so as to avoid their chief barracks."

"I see," Martin said. He knew that the Japanese had full possession of Peking. Even if his father and sister had not written him of it he would have known it from reading the newspapers in New York, where he had been a student. At first he had expected every letter to tell him that his family had moved away, but as time went on and this did not happen he began to believe that things had not changed so much as he had feared they would. Evidently it was still possible for proud Chinese like his father to live under a Japanese flag, although of course it would be only temporary. It was unthinkable that the Japanese would continue to rule in China. That was why he had come back to China with only a master's degree. His father had urged, indeed, had commanded him to remain abroad for two more years at least and if

possible longer in order to get practical experience in his chosen field of metallurgy.

"China needs men of the highest training," his father had written.

But Martin, reading in the American newspapers about the way Japanese soldiers were behaving in his country, could not keep his blood calm enough to sit studying.

"I must come back and do what I can now against the enemy," he wrote his father. And without waiting for reply he had drawn his next term's expense money out of the bank and bought a ticket for China. He had expected questions and even trouble at the port; but when he had given his father's name there had been no trouble and the questions had ceased.

"Do the Japanese annoy you on the street?" he asked his sister now.

Again there was that faint but unmistakable hesitation in her answer. Then she said:

"Sometimes—no, not if they know who I am." Her face shadowed. "But I hate them!" she said in a low voice. "I want to avoid them!"

"Of course," he agreed. He was glad to avoid them, too, and he said nothing when the chauffeur drove slowly through small winding alleys instead of the wide main streets of the city.

When the car drew up finally before the gate of his father's home, his throat tightened. He was really home at last!

"It looks just the same," he said, gazing at it.

It was just the same, the wide wooden gates painted vermilion red and set in the thick brick wall and over the wall the old twin pomegranate trees of the entrance court.

"How the trees have grown!" he said.

"Seven years," Siu-li said smiling. "I've grown, too, and so have you."

"Yes," he said.

Then he saw something was changed after all. Instead of the one watchman he had been used to see at his father's gate, he now saw two soldiers, uniformed, their bayonets fixed. They presented arms smartly as he stepped from the car and he was embarrassed.

"What's this?" he whispered to Siu-li when he had returned their salute.

"Father has to have a bodyguard just now," she said in a voice whose quality confounded him. It was angry with scorn.

But she led the way quickly into the gate and there was no time for questions. The first courtyard was full of eager servants, waiting to welcome home the son of the house. Firecrackers exploded and banners waved. He had to speak to all the old ones and to acknowledge the bows of the new. Even his old wet nurse was there, come in from the country for this day. His mother had died at the birth of the twins,

and while Siu-li had her own nurse, Ling Ma had fed Martin and taken care of him when he was too big to suckle. Everyone had expected his father to take another wife but he had never done so.

"But where is Father?" he asked his sister when it was over at last.

"He seems not to have come home yet," she replied. She hesitated, then went on. "Why don't you go to your room and change your things? By then surely he will be back."

"I will," he replied.

They stood a moment, he feeling that she was about to speak of something. But she did not. She touched his hand merely.

"It is very good to have you home again," she said and left him.

His own room was not changed at all. Its wide paper-latticed window looked out into his own small courtyard. The bamboos, the pine, were the same. Bamboos attained their growth in a single year and seven years were nothing to the pine, already two centuries old.

"Japan and China," he thought, and was pleased with his comparison.

The door opened and Ling Ma came, her face all loving solicitude.

"Now, heart of my flesh, you are not to touch anything. I will unpack your garments and fold them away."

"Foreign suits must be hung, not folded, Ling Ma," he said.

"Then show me one and I will do the others," she said. "You must rest yourself, you must eat and sleep and play after all these years of study. You are too thin." She came close and searched his face. "You didn't take a foreign wife!"

Martin laughed at her. "No, no wife!"

She nodded her satisfaction. "Then we must see to it. I will talk with your father myself."

Martin sat down in his foreign easy chair. "I haven't seen my father yet," he said.

"Oh, he's busy—very busy—" Ling Ma said. She had her face deep in one of his trunks. He could only see her stout back.

"I never knew my father to be busy," he remarked. He could say things to Ling Ma that he could say to no one else.

"He's very busy now," Ling Ma's voice came out of the trunk.

A sudden thought struck him. He put it away and then returned to it. After all, it was only Ling Ma.

"He's not getting married again, is he?" The thought was repulsive, but his father was only fifty years old and it was possible.

"Don't ask me!" Ling Ma's voice was suddenly snappish. She came out of the trunk and her face was very red from bending so long. "Don't ask me anything, Young Master! I don't know anything. If anybody asks me anything about this house, I don't know. I live in the

country now with my son and I only came back to welcome you home, heart of my body."

He was used to outbursts from Ling Ma, for she was a woman of impetuous temper. Now he hardly knew whether there was truth in his suspicion or whether she was angry because she had been treated in some way she considered unfair. Ling Ma had quarreled often over his father's decrees during his childhood, and it might be her old jealousy against authority over the child in her care.

"Did my father treat you unjustly?" he inquired.

She laughed loudly. "Me, little heart? No, I left this house of my own accord. He even invited me to stay and await your coming. But no, I would not. No, it was nothing he did to me!"

Ling Ma pursed her lips and looked solemn. He was about to put another question to her. Then he decided against it. He did not wish to resume with Ling Ma the old affectionate childish relationship that gave her power over him. He was a man, now. So he said a little coldly:

"That is well, for if he had not given you your due, I should have felt I ought to make amends."

She felt the difference in him and gave way to it at once. "From you I expect only what is good," she said, and then spoke no more, but crept about with her silent solid tread, putting his things right. Then she went away and he was alone.

The house was very still. He had not in years heard such stillness. New York was full of noise, and in its own way, so was the ocean. But this was the stillness of centuries. He felt it around him a protection of strength. What could the enemy do against a great, silent old country?

"They are like swallows attacking a snow-capped mountain," he thought proudly.

At that moment to his astonishment the door opened abruptly, and his father came in.

"Father!" he cried with joy.

"My son," his father replied. He came forward and seized Martin's two hands and held them closely and gazed into his face.

And Martin, receiving that earnest, questioning gaze, felt suddenly shy. Why had his father done so strange a thing as to come to him in his own room? It was not like the austere man he remembered so to step aside from custom. He had been prepared to go to his father when summoned, to stand while his father sat, to answer when he was questioned. But instead here his father was, an eager, even importunate look upon his aging face. He had aged very much. Martin drew back. Instantly his father loosed his hands and the look disappeared.

"Are you well?" he inquired.

"Quite well," Martin replied. He hurried on, anxious for talk. "I hope you are not angry that I disobeyed you, my father. I felt I must come home now—for two reasons. The first is that I want to be of what use I can against the enemy. The second is that I was honestly ashamed to be living abroad in ease and at study as though my country were not suffering."

His father stood looking at him. "I am not angry," he said. "It would be of little use if I were. This generation does what it pleases."

"No, Father, don't speak so," Martin cried. "It makes me feel you are angry!"

His father shook his head. "No, only certain of your misunderstanding," he said in a low voice.

"Father, how can you say that?" Martin demanded. "I am your son!"

But his father only gave him a melancholy smile. "We will see," he said gently. "Meanwhile, it is time for our guests." He glanced at his son's clothing. "What are you wearing?" he inquired.

"What do you wish?" Martin asked, surprised. He had imagined a dinner of old friends, informal and gay, and he had thought with pleasure of a soft silk robe, easy and cool, and which he had not been able to wear for a long time.

"Wear your formal foreign evening clothes," his father said. "And what badges have you? Put on the gold key they gave you, and any other thing you have."

He met his son's stare of astonishment. "I want to be proud of you before my—my friends," he said, and then looked at his watch. "It's late," he muttered and hurried away.

In his room alone Martin dressed himself carefully in his best, stiff shirt, silk vest, tailed coat. He had not worn them since the formal college banquet of his graduation day. He had thought then that he would never wear them again—certainly not in his father's home. More mystified than ever, he put on his Phi Beta Kappa key, and his gold signet ring, and his diamond-studded fraternity pins, one Greek letter and the other the honor society of his profession.

"I have nothing more," he thought. Then he remembered a small pin Siu-li had sent him once in play. It had been attached to the first page of a letter. It was made of silver and enameled in the design of the Chinese flag. Half in fun he took it from the box with his cuff links and pinned it to his lapel.

"Why not?" he thought. "I'm a good Chinese and I'll let the world know it."

He went out of his room, whistling an American tune under his breath. There was no one about, and he sauntered in the direction of the main hall. Then he heard voices and he hurried his steps slightly.

It was half an hour beyond seven but he had not expected anyone before eight. If he knew his China no one came on time to a dinner. The noise now was that of many voices. It sounded as though everyone had come.

He drew aside the red satin curtain hanging in the door and looked. The room was large, but there were many there, between thirty and forty, his eye guessed. And then he saw something else. He could not believe it, but it was true. Three fourths of the guests were Japanese! Then his father saw him.

"Come in, my son," he said.

There was nothing for him to do except to obey.

"You should have warned me," he said to Siu-li.

He had come straight to her room after the interminable dinner was over.

"What do I know to tell you?" she retorted.

The years they had been parted were vanished. His anger and dismay had demanded frankness between them, and she had expected him. When he went to her court the light was shining like moonbeams through the opaqueness of the rice paper lattice, and he saw the shadow of her head bent over a book.

"You should have told me what people are saying," he replied.

"What are people saying except what they, too, do not know?" she retorted again.

"At least you should have told me that my father has Japanese friends," he said.

"But he has always had friends among foreigners in Peking," she said stubbornly. "And some have always been Japanese. The Baron Muraki has been his lifelong friend and you know it."

Yes, he knew it. When he was a little boy Baron Muraki, even then a kindly, aging man, used to bring him miniature rickshas and animals and tiny fish of gold-washed silver. Nevertheless he said, "No one can have Japanese friends now."

"I have told Father that, too," Siu-li said quietly.

"What did he say?" Martin demanded.

"That he had seen too many wars to allow them to change his friendships," she replied.

They looked at each other with the tragic and absolute despair of the young.

"It is such men who will lose our country for us," Martin cried, "and I shall tell him so!"

"You will tell Father that?" she cried.

"I'm not afraid of him, any more, not after tonight," he told her. "If you could have seen him, Siu-li, bowing to those strutting little

men, the gold on their uniforms like scabs! And calling them carefully by their titles, General This and General That! And pressing the best of everything on them and watching them grow drunk as though they were doing him a favor. I could scarcely swallow, though I've been thinking for years of eating sharks fins again and spit-roasted duck!" His young face gloomed at her, and she cried:

"Ah, it is hateful, but how can you say anything to Father?"

"I can," he retorted. "These are not the times of Confucius."

He strode away on this strength to his father's court. But it was now very late. The rooms were dark around the large silent court where his father lived so much alone. He hesitated and knew he dared not knock in spite of his angry courage.

"I will wait until tomorrow," he thought, and tiptoed away. It would be all the better to wait, he told himself, back in his own room. He could speak calmly and reasonably in the morning. After all, his father was an old man and it was possible that he did not know what he was doing. It was hard to imagine that the keen eyes of his father did not see all that went on before them, but the time must come for him to fail as for all men. He sighed, tried to sleep, and could not until it was nearly dawn. Then he slept long and extravagantly, and it was noon when he was awakened by Wang Ting, standing by his bed.

"Your father commands your presence," Wang Ting said.

And out of old habit Martin leaped to his feet.

What he must remember, he told himself an hour later, in his father's study was that old bonds were broken between a man and his son. What the revolution had begun this war had finished. Everywhere young men and women were telling their parents that their country must come first. "Patriotism is higher than filial duty," they were telling old people who felt themselves deserted.

He struggled against the bonds still strong between himself and this tall, slender, silk-robed man. It was hard to believe so dignified a gentleman had been the one he had watched last night. When Martin thought of this his will hardened. His father had been that man, nevertheless.

"Sit down, my son," his father told him.

He sat down, not cornerwise as he had been taught to sit in an elder's presence but as one man sits in the presence of another. If his father noticed this, he made no sign of it.

"There are many things between us for talk," his father said. "And yesterday I was busy."

"Your time is no longer your own," Martin said boldly.

His father threw him a sharp look. "It is true I am busy," he said smoothly. Something crept over his face like a veil, leaving it expres-

sionless. Against it Martin suddenly rebelled. The last seven years had been spent among frank and impulsive foreigners, and he would not return to careful speech.

"I shall speak plainly," he told his father. "I was surprised to see our enemies in this house."

"Baron Muraki—" his father began.

But Martin interrupted him. "The Baron was only one of nearly a score."

The look on his father's face grew closer.

"Do you accuse me?" he asked gently.

"I do," Martin said. His eyes were steady upon his father's face. But his father's eyes did not turn either.

"Does it occur to you that I may have my reasons?" he asked.

"There can be no reason, now," Martin declared. Small things he had forgotten were coming back to him. In New York a Chinese class-mate had suddenly declined further friendship with him. When Martin pressed him one day with an invitation the young man had said curtly, before he turned away:

"My father does not know your father."

It had seemed foolish then to give as cause against friendship that a Chinese merchant in New York had not known a Chinese gentleman in Peking.

"That can scarcely be expected," Martin had said haughtily and thereafter had ignored the man. Now he understood.

And Ling Ma last night—now he understood her hints.

"Do you know, Father, what people are saying about you?" he demanded.

"I have never known what they say, because I have not cared," his father said calmly.

"You must care now—they are saying you are a friend of the Japanese." He watched his father's face. It did not change.

"I have always had my friends among the Japanese," he said.

"They are saying you are a traitor," Martin rose to his feet.

His father's face did not quiver. "Do you believe them?" he asked.

Martin saw curiosity in his look—nothing else. He was suddenly full of angry certainty. Nobody, he thought, had ever known his father well. He had come and gone in this house, a cold and dignified figure whom they had all feared.

"I do not know what to believe," he said.

There was a long pause, then his father spoke:

"You will believe what you want to believe," he said. "That is the habit of the young."

"And is that all you will say?" Martin demanded.

"That is all," his father replied.

They were both very angry, and Martin was the more angry because he was less able to control himself than his father.

"I cannot stay in a house where enemies are accepted as friends," he said proudly.

"Do you mean my house?" his father inquired.

His blandness drove Martin to his last step.

"Yes," he said.

He rushed from the room. He had exiled himself the day after he had come home. Where now could he go? Siu-li must know. She must help him. He went to find her. She was in her courtyard sprinkling small gray orchids in the rocks, her fingers dipping in and out of a pewter bowl she held.

"I have told Father I cannot stay," he said to her.

She turned, and the bowl dropped from her hand.

"You have quarreled with him!"

"Yes—forever," he said. "And you must come, too, Siu-li. Only traitors can live in this house. You must come!" he insisted when he saw her face. "I can't leave you if Japanese men are to be allowed to come and go here. But where shall we go?"

She stooped and picked up the bowl.

"I have it already long planned," she said softly. She glanced about the small courtyard. "Twice—I didn't know whether I could stay. There is an old general—did you see him last night? The one with the small white mustache?"

"Yes," he said, and his gorge rose.

"Well, that one—once he saw me, and he asked for me to be brought in." Disgust was dark upon her face.

"Did Father send for you?" Martin cried.

"Yes—I didn't know why, or I would not have gone. When I entered the main hall the old general was there."

"But—but—what did Father say?" Martin was bewildered. This was not like his father!

"He said he thought modern young women could take care of themselves," Siu-li said. A slight pink rose in her cheeks and she went on. "The truth is we had quarreled the day before, Father and I. He did not want me to go to a dance at the Grand Hotel. I wanted to go and I went. So perhaps he was punishing me."

"It was not suitable punishment," Martin cried.

They stood full of a mutual anger.

"We must go," he repeated.

"It could be to the northwest," she said. "I have a friend who knows the way—a girl—soldier."

"Communist?" he asked.

"Guerilla," she amended.

"Where?"

"I can send her a message for tonight. She comes and goes," Siu-li replied. "She is here now in the city. When she goes back we can go with her. She has ways."

He thought hard for a moment. Into the northwest! It was the birthplace of bandits and war lords in the old days, the stronghold of Communists in the new. He had seen men from the northwest, camel drivers and traveling merchants, soldiers and wandering priests. They spoke with a burr upon their tongues that was foreign to him and they were more foreign to him than the Americans among whom he had lived. And he was loath to leave this home to which he had looked with longing all his years away from it. Life in Peking was easy and beautiful.

"But not now," he thought; and aloud he said, "It may as well be there as anywhere."

Siu-li wavered one moment before she spoke, but only one.

"I also," she said firmly. She looked down and saw the pewter bowl in her hand and in a gesture of recklessness she lifted it up and threw it over the wall.

He was forever after to divide his life into two parts, that before he knew Meng-an, and all that which came to him afterwards. The question which he put to himself often was why he did not at once see her for what she was. But he did not. On the day on which he and Siu-li left their home with her, he saw his sister's friend as a small inconspicuous creature, so like a young boy in her peasant garb that it took faith to believe her a girl. He had seen plenty of girls in America, athletic girls, boyish girls, strongbodied and clear-eyed girls. But one always knew they were girls. Meng-an was without sex, he thought, looking at her again and again, even that first day.

"Though why did I look at her so often?" he inquired of memory.

She was not beautiful. An earnest face, a square, an unchanging mouth with small full lips, eyes very black and white, short shining black hair, skin as brown as a peasant's and a slim breastless body, carried like the soldier she was, though she wore no uniform now. He said for days of hard journeying, always westward, that there was no allure in this little creature. She seldom talked and when she did she seemed purposely brusque and plain. But though she was small, she was merciless in her strength. She could walk endlessly and ride anything of a beast. Once she leaped astride a farmer's ox as it pulled a wooden cart. And she had refused the motor car Siu-li had suggested bringing the day they started.

"Why trouble ourselves with a machine we can use only for a few miles?" she said scornfully.

He did not at that moment realize all that her words meant. They had left home quite openly one clear summer's day. Each carried a knapsack and no more. Their father never rose until noon, and Wang Ting meeting them at the gate smiled and bowed and said, as he hurried on:

"You have a lucky day for your holiday."

They had looked at each other and smiled behind his back.

"A long holiday," Martin had said.

They had not walked more than half a day before Siu-li was exhausted. The sun grew hot. Meng-an, springing along, her cloth shoes silent in the dust, was merciful.

"You will be able to walk more tomorrow," she said.

She kept watching for a vehicle and in a little while she stopped a farmer returning from market with his wheelbarrow empty and asked for a ride. He was willing enough, but when Meng-an bade Siu-li seat herself he was less willing.

"I thought it was to be you, girl soldier," he complained.

"It is the same—she is my friend," Meng-an replied calmly, and so the farmer pushed Siu-li as far as he was going.

"Why was he willing for you?" Martin inquired, curious to know this small creature's power.

"He knows we work for them," Meng-an answered vaguely. "And I pass here often."

Everywhere it was the same. With an assurance that might have been impudent in another, Meng-an asked and was given. Village bakers gave her bread, at teashops she was given a pot of tea, and anywhere a small traveling restaurant keeper stirred up a bowl of noodles and vegetable oil and shook his head when she held out the cash.

"We all work for the country," he would say, a little pompously.

They depended on Meng-an for everything and the more as they came into the northwest where she knew all and they knew nothing. By now Siu-li wore man's clothing that she might walk more freely, and Martin wore peasant's garments, and Meng-an wore the ragged boy's clothing that she always put on when she entered land held by the enemy. They walked until noon, ate, slept by the roadside, and walked again until midnight. This they did day after day until it became the habit of their lives. Every other thing they had once done now grew dreamlike in their memories.

"I wonder if Father minds that we are gone?" Siu-li said one day as they rested for a moment.

"He knows why we went," Martin replied.

Meng-an's eyes were upon the bare and distant hills.

"I have not seen my parents for six years," she said suddenly.

"Do you long for them?" Siu-li asked.

"Sometimes," Meng-an said. "Then I remember that if I return to them I return to all the old life—marriage to a man I do not know, a courtyard with the gates locked. And then I get up and go on."

She had never said so much. There was a flicker in her eyes as she spoke but no more. But Martin thought to himself that this small creature had felt things that he did not know.

"Were you early betrothed?" he asked.

She nodded, but did not speak, and he could not for decency ask again.

All these days they had been walking through enemy-held country. Had they been without Meng-an they would have been stopped before this by enemy soldiers. But Meng-an knew how to come and go as a mouse does in a crowded house. Everywhere she was told by someone, a beggar, a farmer, a priest, if there were enemy soldiers near, and then she led them differently, by secret devious ways of her own. Never once did they meet the enemy face to face.

"Though sometimes I do," she told them.

"What then?" Martin asked. He watched her while she answered. Upon that small inscrutable face he was beginning to discern changes, slight to an unseeing eye but vivid to him. This girl could feel.

"I always pretend to be a fool," she said. "Like this—"

By some trick she threw her lower jaw crooked and crossed her eyes and looked an idiot. She straightened herself again.

"Then they let me pass."

"I should think so," Siu-li said laughing.

But Martin said nothing. At this moment he was not sure whether a girl should be like this Meng-an. There she sat, on a side of the dusty road where they had stopped for a rest. Her hair was brown with dust, and dust lay in shadows on her face.

"She is not beautiful," he thought, "though brave."

And then that night they passed out of enemy-held country and into their own. He could feel the difference, or thought he could, even in the twilight air. Certainly people were more free in their talk and their laughter at the inn where they lodged, and there was much boasting of how this one and that had crept in and out of the enemy line. But Meng-an was the most changed of all. When they reached the inn she went into one room a while. A little later she came out for the evening meal. Martin had washed himself and changed his garments. But he was not prepared for what he now saw. A slim young soldier came out of the room Siu-li and Meng-an shared, a soldier in a clean khaki uniform, belted and buttoned and with a small pistol at the waist. It was Meng-an. When she saw him she saluted and gave him the smallest of smiles. It was the first she had ever given him.

"You must go to our general," Meng-an told him. Three days more had brought them to the stronghold of this Chinese army to which she belonged. For three days they had walked among a tranquil people, tilling and working the land as though war were in another world. Night brought them to the camp itself, where he would go to the men's division and Siu-li and Meng-an to the women's. They halted at the gate of the temple compound where guards stood. Once inside they must part. Thus Meng-an had paused to speak.

"I will see him tonight," she went on, "and when I have given him my secret messages from the old city, I will tell him of you. He will be glad, for he needs men like you."

Now Martin did not want to part from her.

"When shall we see each other?" he said boldly.

The flicker in her eyes he could discern but not its meaning. Was it feeling for him or against him? He did not know.

"There are many meetings for us all," she said, and whether it was promise or evasion he still did not know. And she gave him no time to think. She led the way inside the gate and they were parted. He was given food and a bed and by dark he slept as all slept, because light at night meant oil and oil was money, and money must be spent on bullets for the enemy.

At dawn he rose, called by a bugle, and after food Martin was summoned by a young man so carelessly clothed as a soldier that on the upper part of him he wore a farmer's coat.

"Are you the son of Liu Ming Chen?" he inquired abruptly of Martin.

"How do you know my father's name?" Martin asked.

"We all know it," the man replied.

Martin was silenced by fear. Why should all here know the name of his quiet scholar father in Peking except now as a traitor? He said nothing.

"The general calls you," the man said. "Follow me."

Without hesitation Martin followed and found himself in the doorway of the cave house where the general lived at the back of the temple as many did here, among these high barren mountains. But this room was comfortable with furniture and the floor was rock swept clean. The general was not a fat old man but a young thin-bodied man in faded uniform. No one could have said he was anything more than another, except agile and clever, relentless if he were an enemy.

"One tells me you know metals," he said to Martin without greeting.

That one, Martin knew, was Meng-an. He wondered jealously if she knew this man well and if they were friends. He had missed her already, for when he woke he wondered if today he would see her and how and when.

"It is true," he replied.

The young general looked at him shrewdly.

"You left your father," he said.

"Yes," Martin said. The man knew that!

"Many leave their parents these days," the general said gravely. "Once when I was a child I was sent to a Christian school. In their sacred book I found one day by chance words like this: 'And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' I who had been taught the doctrine of Wu Wei, I thought, 'How evil are these Christians not to know filial duty!' But the days are come." He paused a second. "I, too, left my parents. We must seek a new foundation for the state, lest we be lost."

The general's accent was not that of a peasant.

"Did you go abroad?" Martin asked.

"Yes—who told you?" the general replied.

"No one—but where?" Martin asked again.

"To Harvard and to Leipzig," the general said.

"And you are here," Martin said. It was wonder enough.

"I would be nowhere else," the general said. He hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Out of these inner regions will come those who will take back the land."

"But do these people know they are being attacked?" Martin asked.

"They are so calm and they work in their fields as they always have."

"By day," the general broke in. "By night they put down their hoes and take their guns. But by what good luck you came I cannot say. We lack iron, and there is ore in these hills. The rocks shine when they are split. Is that iron? If it is, I will set about mining it out. It may be silver—and it is not so quickly useful. Do you see your task?"

"Yes," Martin said. He was looking at the seamed side of the cave as he answered. In the rocks was his task. He must find iron to make bullets for the enemy.

"Have you any message for your father?" the general asked abruptly. "Meng-an will start for Peking tonight."

"She goes back?" Martin cried.

"It is her work—to slip between the enemy armies and find out everything and bring me word."

"She told you of my father," Martin said.

The general nodded.

"No, I have no message for him," Martin said.

The general nodded again. "Then you may go," he told him.

He did not see Meng-an again. When he reached his tent six men were waiting. When they saw him they saluted.

"We are to go with you into the hills," they said.

By some means they had with them the few tools he needed—pick-

axes, baskets for rock fragments, materials for mapping, and rolls of bedding.

"At once?" he asked.

"It is so ordered," they replied.

"But I must see someone before I go," he protested.

"We will wait a few minutes," a soldier said, "at your command."

"Let it not be longer, sir," another said. "The general does not like delay."

"No, he would not, Martin knew, thinking of that firm young figure. He had turned away and at the door of the women's barracks he asked the girl soldier on guard for Siu-li, and was told to wait.

She came a few moments later and quickly he told her his orders.

"And you?" he asked.

"I am to go into training, merely," she said.

"And Meng-an?" he asked, wanting only to hear of her and knowing very well that he knew more than Siu-li did.

"I have not seen her," Siu-li replied.

He knew he should tell nothing he had been told and yet he wanted some communication with that small creature slipping her lonely way among the enemy. He said in a low voice, too low for the waiting guard to hear:

"If you see her today, tell her I said to take care for herself as she goes." And then when he saw the astonishment in Siu-li's eyes he added quickly, "She is more value than you know—to the cause, I mean."

But Siu-li was shrewd with the shrewdness of a woman.

"I was about to ask you now that we are here if you regret coming, but I think I need not," she said.

He laughed sheepishly, feeling himself grow red.

"No, you need not," he agreed. "I am not sorry."

Weeks passed him, and he spent them day upon day in searching the barren hills. They were not barren, he was beginning to discover. Under their sandy tawny surfaces there was rock and in the seams of the rock minerals. He walked up the steep beds of mountain streams, his eyes upon every glint and glitter. The men with him were well chosen, for they were men who belonged to the hills, who had spent their youth washing the streams for silver.

"But is there iron?" he asked them as he asked the hills themselves.

"That we don't know, for we never looked for it when there was silver," they said.

In their fashion they had mined some parts of the hills, and they led him to shallow pits they had dug. These he tapped and examined and tested the fragments he chose. There was silver everywhere, but he could not find iron.

"We may have to make our bullets of silver," he thought grimly.

The strange hills surrounded him, and silence was their atmosphere. There seemed no life in them, and yet sometimes he came upon a monastery built out of sandy rock and seeming in its shape and color so like a cliff that only a gate told the difference. Inside the priests lived, silent so long that they could scarcely speak when he spoke, men whom the mountain winds had dried and beaten upon and bleached until they too were sand-colored. And yet everyone of them when he told them his task, were eager to help him and to show him certain dark ledges they had seen. Everyone of them knew that they had an enemy.

Everywhere they knew. In the night under the endless clear skies and beneath the sharp stars he thought of those who were farmers by day and soldiers by night, and he thought of priests who wanted no peace, and of his sister, who had been so tenderly reared, learning to march long hours and to fire a gun, and most of all and longest he thought of Meng-an making her lonely way in and out among the enemy.

"She has the hardest and most dangerous work of us all," he thought. When he thought of this his bitterness against his father heaped itself up with gall. "He betrays every one of us," he thought.

The filial piety he had been taught he put from him forever, that ancient teaching which had tied together the generations of his people.

"I am no more his son," he thought. And he thought, "We must build a new country, and every generation must be its own lawmaker."

"There is no iron," he told the general.

"There must be," the general said. "Go back."

The hills were bitterly cold now with autumn. The foolish silver was rich everywhere. But the hills held nothing more. He had stayed a month, and then the cold rain had driven him down from the summit. And then it had seemed he must make report of having found nothing. And he knew, too—the long silent nights and the hot moons had told him—that he longed to see Meng-an. Had she come and gone safely? He must know or thought he must. And so he had come down. He had gone at once to Siu-li. But Siu-li was not there. She had been sent the day before with her regiment to a village to the east to make forays by night against an enemy garrison. He was sick with alarm when he heard it, and then dismayed because since she was gone there was no one he could ask of Meng-an. Everyone went about his business here, and it was no one's business to speak of Meng-an. And he had had to go then to the general.

"Go back," the general said now.

And against his look there was no hope of refusal. Besides how could he say, "I cannot, until I have seen a certain woman," and how could he even say, "I must hear first if Meng-an is safe?"

The general saw his hesitation. "We are still at war," he said. "Why you delay?"

"I do not," Martin said doggedly.

He went back that same day.

He had lived in the hills so long now that when he thought of cities and of people they were words and nothing more. Had he once seen ships and trains and traveled upon them? Even his memories of them were gone. He had for companions these men as dogged as himself and for his strength his own determination that if there was iron in these hills he would find it. And if he had needed a spur to prod him he had it. One day when in an October as cold as winter where he was, he sat on a rock near a summit eating his bread and salt fish, at noon, he saw even there an airplane. It flew well above the mountain top and yet close enough for him to see it. It was an enemy plane! He could see its markings clearly above him as he looked up at it. It sank a little as though it saw him, then rose and sped on. An enemy plane over these far, inner mountains! He swallowed his food quickly and called his men. They were eating fifty feet below him in a shallow valley. He had climbed out of it to see the hills while he ate.

"Come on!" he cried, and when they were come he said, "We must make haste if the enemy has flown as far as this."

They had worked longer after that, and every day they searched the skies. There were no planes for ten days more, and then eleven planes flew over them like wild geese.

That was the day he found iron. He found it early in the morning, low, near the base of the peak upon which he had spent uselessly nearly fifteen days. He had gone too high. The iron was old, and aeons had driven the deposits deep into the bowels of the mountains.

"Have I been looking too high, everywhere?" he asked himself.

He was so excited by this possible thing that he went no higher. He covered half the base of the mountain by noon and in seven places he found signs of iron, whether it was seven different places or all one great rich vein he did not know. But when he sat down at noon, he ate his bread in such excitement that he could scarcely swallow.

Then it was he heard the planes, and looking up he saw their geese-like passage. The sight might only yesterday have filled him with despair. But today he shook his fist at them and with his mouth filled with bread he shouted:

"We have our bullets for you!"

Now he could go back with good news. He was even glad that he had found iron in autumn instead of spring. Soon it would be too cold for the enemy planes to fly over the inland, and during the winter

months the mines could be planned and made ready. He had long talks about machinery with his men. When he thought of machinery for mines he was troubled. How could they construct and haul and place those great masses? But these men had been miners without such aid. Bamboo and ropes and wooden buckets were their utensils, and Martin listened to them. "A little more than they have had and it will be much," he thought as they went on.

Everywhere through the countryside there were signs of autumn. The harvests were good, and the farmers grew bold to reap them, because few airplanes came now to bomb.

"In the summer we spend half the day in our bomb huts," they told Martin. "Well, it's cool there!" they said, grinning with mischief. "Well, we have had bandits of many kinds," another said. Wherever he went there was no talk of hardship or surrender, only of how work could be done, whether the enemy came or not.

"I wish my father could be here," he thought. "If he saw these people, could he still betray them?"

The thought of his father was like a sore in his heart. Whatever he did, he thought, it would not be enough to atone for his father. And when he thought of Meng-an he asked himself what right he had, the son of a traitor, to think of her.

In this mood he walked the miles back to the encampment and, without asking of his sister or Meng-an, he went, dusty as he was, to report to the general. In his hand he carried the fragments of rock and he laid them upon the table.

"I have found iron," he said simply, "and plenty of it." The news was enough of itself.

The general took up the rocks as though they were gold.

"Better than gold," he said. And then when he had examined them he looked up at Martin. "When can you go back?" he asked.

"Today, if you bid me," Martin replied steadily.

But the general laughed. "Now you are taught," he said. "It is the answer I wanted. But you shall not go today. We must make our plans."

"There is not much time before winter comes down," Martin said doggedly.

"Not much, but a day or two," the general said, "and that is long enough for everything. I have news for you. Do you remember my little spy?"

"Meng-an?" Her name flew out of Martin's mouth like a bird from a cage.

The general nodded. "How did you know her name?" he asked, surprised.

"She brought my sister and me here," Martin said.

"Do you have a sister?" the general demanded of him. "And if you have, why did you not tell me?"

"There was no need," Martin said.

But the general struck a bell on his table. "She must come here, too," he said. "This news is for both of your father's children."

A soldier appeared.

"Go and fetch—what is her name?"

"Siu-li," Martin said. "Of the Third Regiment."

"Surname Liu, name Siu-li, of the Third Regiment," the general ordered. "And tell Meng-an to come also."

"So!" the soldier cried as he had been taught, and saluting he hurried away.

At the mention of his father Martin was afraid. What would the general call good news except that a traitor had been killed? If this was the news he must warn Siu-li first. They must show no grief. He thought quickly.

"Sir," he asked, "may I speak first with my sister? If something has befallen our father, it will be better to prepare her for it."

"Nothing has befallen him," the general replied. He was turning the fragments of rocks over in his hands, dreaming of the precious stuff they held.

So there was nothing to do except to wait.

"Sit down," the general said and he sat down. It was very hard to wait. The general was looking at the rock now through a small hand microscope.

Then in a while they heard the light quick tread of feet trained to march, the feet of girl soldiers. The general put down his microscope and looked up. The door curtains opened. Two straight slender girls in uniform stood there. They saluted and stood at attention, Meng-an and Siu-li. Martin smiled at Siu-li and looked at Meng-an. His heart rose on a great wave of pride. These two girls in the old days would have been sheltered, helpless creatures behind a courtyard wall; Siu-li even a few months ago had been in her way useless.

"Is this your sister?" the general asked of Martin, but gazing at Siu-li.

"It is she," Martin said, rising to his feet.

"Be at ease, all of you," the general said. He seemed to have forgotten why he had called Meng-an here. "Be seated," he told Siu-li, without taking his eyes from her face. "I have not seen you before," he said.

Siu-li blushed a little. The uniform, her straight-cut hair, the pistol at her belt, her feet in hard leather shoes, none of these could hide what she was, a soft-eyed girl. Those large soft eyes she now turned

upon the young general as full of coquetry as though she wore a silk robe and had jewels in her hair.

"I did not know you wished it," she said demurely.

"But I do," the general said.

Meng-an looked at Martin. In her eyes he saw that flickering—it was laughter, surely. He smiled to answer it. It was pleasant to communicate thus with her over those other two. Then Meng-an coughed a small dry cough, and the general glanced at her and remembered.

"Ah, you also," he said, but his voice was very different to her. "Yes, and now repeat what you told me. Who told you that the enemy is about to march southward and how we can surprise that march?"

"Wang Ting," Meng-an replied.

"Wang Ting!" Siu-li cried. "But he is my father's secretary!"

Meng-an did not turn her head. She continued to make report, her eyes upon the general's face. "He is sent by his master. Of himself he knows nothing, but his master is in a position to know much and will be as long as his life is spared by the enemy. If they find out he will die. But until that time, I go to a certain small teashop and there I can be told."

All this Meng-an said in her even voice as though what she said was nothing.

"If I had known there was also you," the general said to Siu-li as though she were the only one in the room, "I would have told you at once what your father was. He has been for us since the city fell. Why do you think this little spy comes and goes except to bring me news from your father?"

Now Siu-li turned upon Meng-an. "And you did not tell me!"

"How did I know what you thought of your father?" Meng-an retorted. "And I have my orders against talk about him with anyone," she added.

"And you," the general said to Martin, "you I wanted to try, to see if you were fit to be your father's son. When you did not give up until you found the iron we need, I said, 'He is fit.'"

"You know I doubted my father?" Martin asked slowly.

"Your father begged me in a letter to tell you what he was, when I saw the time was right," the general replied.

They sat, these impetuous two, the modern son and daughter of an old Confucian scholar, and humbled themselves in their knowledge. Then suddenly Siu-li began to weep. She turned to Martin.

"We—we were very unjust!" she whispered.

"Yes," Martin said in a daze, "yes, we were." He thought of his old father in the midst of the comings and goings of the enemy in his house, holding his life as lightly as a toy in his hands, and he cleared his throat. "I wish we could tell him so," he said.

"I will tell him," Meng-an said calmly.

"Don't cry!" the general said suddenly to Siu-li.

She looked at him, her great eyes dewy with tears and very beautiful.

"How can I help it?" she said piteously. "I have been a wicked daughter. I ought to have known my father couldn't—be what we thought he was!"

"I say you are not to weep any more!" the general shouted. "I cannot bear it," he added in a gentler voice.

And then Martin felt his own eyes caught by someone's gaze, and looked up, and there were Meng-an's eyes, holding his, and this time it was as though their hands clasped. And suddenly his heart inquired, "Is there any reason now?" and then answered itself, "There is no reason."

"Now this is all settled," the general said hastily, "and it is time we went back to our work." His eyes took leave of Siu-li's soft black ones, though unwillingly. "Let us proceed," he said sharply. "Soldiers, attention!"

Martin rose, Siu-li and Meng-an leaped to their feet, saluted, wheeled, and marched out.

The general stared after them and sighed. Then he smiled at Martin.

"You are in love with that little spy of mine," he said.

"How—who—?" Martin stammered.

"Ah, I saw it," the general said calmly. "Well, why not? Everything must go on the same in wartime. Well, you may have my little spy. Tell her so. But she must go on working. We must all go on working."

"Yes, sir," Martin said. He was dazed with the general's calmness over the most enormous thing in the world. Then even as he looked at the general he saw a strange thing happening. Over that firm stern young face he saw a soft sheepish smile appear that turned the general at once into an ordinary young man such as may be seen any spring day in any country.

"Your sister has very fine eyes," he said abruptly.

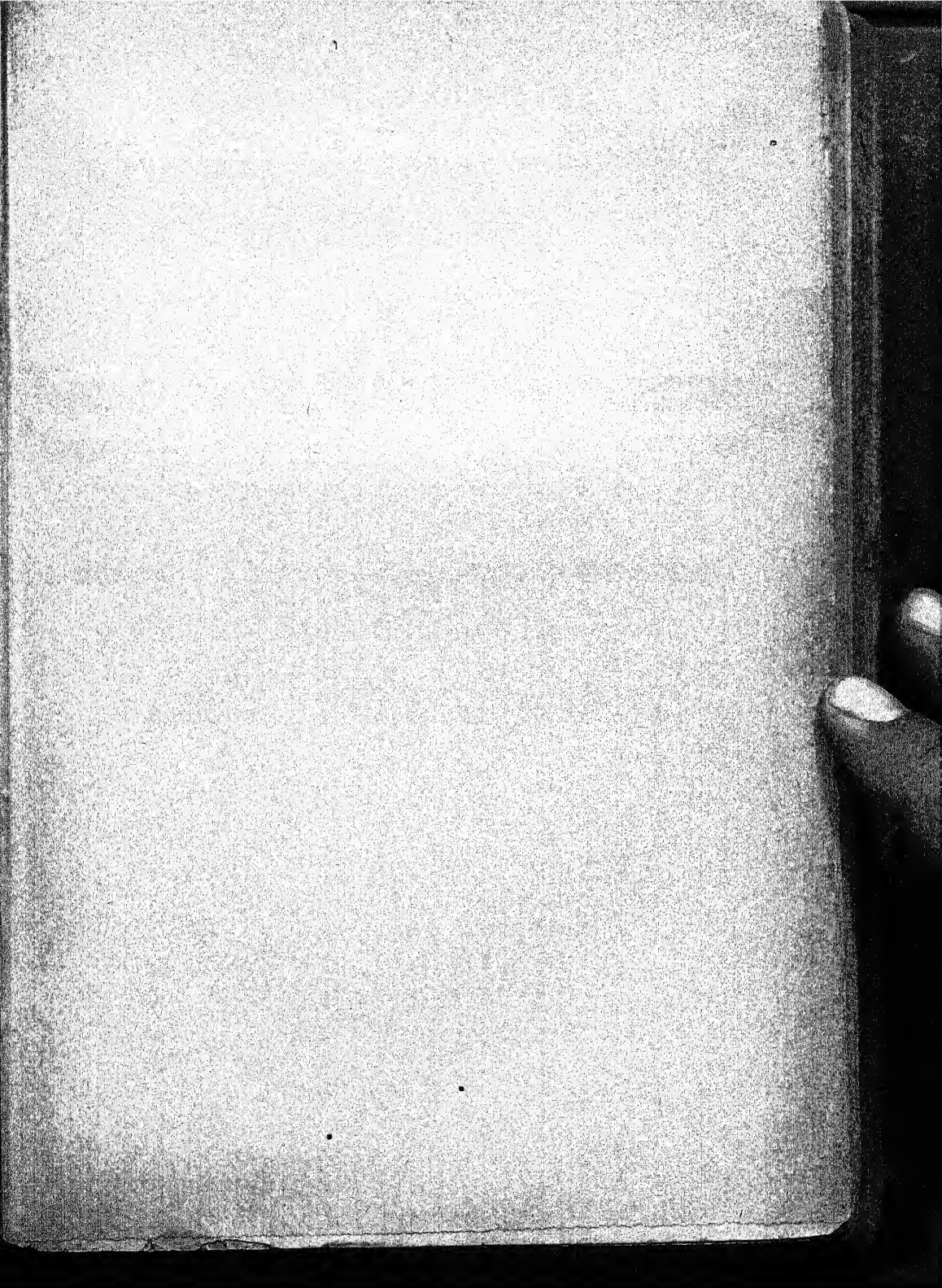
"They have been so considered," Martin replied.

The general looked startled. "I suppose so," he said unwillingly. He reflected a moment, still staring at Martin without seeing him.

"Why not?" he demanded after a moment.

"Why not, indeed?" Martin replied. "As you said, sir, even in war everything must go on as usual."

They looked at each other for the least part of a moment longer and suddenly they laughed, and then, sharing this laughter in their youth like a cup of wine between them, they laughed again for pure pleasure.



W. F. MORRIS

Mr. Morris's fine story, *Cunningham*, here published for the first time in America, is one of the most intimate and factual accounts of a spy to be found in our collection. It merits comparison with the narratives of Mr. Maugham and Mr. White. Like those stories it suggests a background of actuality not wholly to be explained by writing talent. One fancies that a fat dossier is buried somewhere in the British archives, setting forth the real name of the remarkable spy known here simply as *Cunningham*. In retrospect, one is thrilled by the calm audacity of *Cunningham's* operations and realizes the truth of the remark that "all spies live dangerously." The background of the story is World War I; the scene is first France, then a German prison camp in Bavaria. The narrator's account of his escape from the prison camp, and his subsequent adventures, will curl your eyebrows, and not just with the thrill of fiction. There is a flavor of fiction, perhaps, in the surprising events in Cologne, which brought him ultimate freedom, but one can and does believe them.

CUNNINGHAM

I FIRST MET CUNNINGHAM in the spring of 1916. It was outside the Company Headquarters' dug-out one glorious day in June when the birds were singing as though there were no war within a hundred miles, and the familiar smell of chloride of lime and herded humanity was held temporarily in abeyance by the fresh early morning air. He had come up with the rations during the night to replace young Merton who had been knocked out during one of those raids our Divisional Headquarters were so fond of ordering.

I could see at a glance that he had been out before, and I liked the look of him as he stood there by the dug-out steps, hands in pockets, pipe in mouth and the old pattern respirator satchel slung over one shoulder. The appearance of a new member of the mess was always a matter of importance, for when half a dozen men are cooped up together for what someone aptly described as long periods of intense boredom punctuated by moments of intense fear, tempers wore thin occasionally, and one man of the wrong sort could create more mischief than the proverbial wagon-load of monkeys.

But it went deeper even than that. Most commanding officers, I fancy, divided their juniors into two categories: those who did merely what they were told, and those who could be relied upon in an emergency to carry on upon their own initiative. Unhealthy duties such as raids and patrols were supposed to be allotted in rotation from a roster, but whenever it came to sending a party on some highly dangerous and important job, ninety-nine commanding officers out of a hundred would let the roster go hang and put an officer from the second category in command. Now as the number of names in this category was usually considerably smaller than that in the other group, there was undeniably a good deal of what is known as working the willing horse, and it was therefore a matter of considerable interest to all of us to see how a new-comer shaped.

Cunningham shaped well. He quickly graduated to that select band of soldiers that is distinguished by no particular rank—and by no kaleidoscope of chest colours for that matter—but possesses simply that little extra something that the others have not got. The men, quick in such matters, noticed it at once. Even the fussiest and jumpiest of them were calm and happy if he were in charge of them, and the usual good-natured blasphemy which the detailing of a working or wiring party called forth became noticeably milder when it was known that he was to lead it.

From the Colonel downwards we were quickly satisfied that Cunningham would “do,” and we were the more glad to have him because with the Somme battle approaching, we knew that officers of his stamp were worth their weight in gold.

Cunningham and I hit it off very well together. We shared a brick-floored cottage room when we were back in rest, and on two memorable occasions, when the loan of a car enabled us to run into Amiens, we did ourselves superlatively well amid the varied wartime attractions of that remarkable city. Friendships in those days were usually strong but of short duration. One or other would receive a Blighty wound, if nothing worse, and pass back down the lines never to be seen again. In our case, however, a slight mishap to one of us served only to strengthen the attachment.

For some days the battalion had been holding on to one of those graveyards of bare, blasted tree-trunks and fallen branches that had been leafy woods less than a month before; and one morning just before dawn, it was discovered that Cunningham was missing. He had been out with a patrol which had returned safely, and he had last been seen no more than a few yards from the edge of the wood. It was certain he could not be far away, so I took a man with me and set out to look for him.

For twenty minutes we searched without success, but as soon as the

light grew strong enough to see at all clearly, I spotted him out by a shell-hole no more than a few yards from the margin of the wood. My runner, young Sanders, Cunningham's devoted servant, ran forward before I could stop him, but he went no more than a couple of paces. The light was still poor, but a man running upright makes a conspicuous target at under two hundred yards.

I crawled out to find young Sanders with a neat hole drilled in his forehead; death must have been instantaneous. I had begun to fear that Cunningham too was dead, but to my great relief as I wriggled up to him, he turned his head and assured me that a broken arm was the full extent of the damage. It appeared that in the darkness he had tripped into a shell-hole and broken his arm, and on trying to crawl out had become entangled in some low-pegged wire. With but one arm in commission, his struggles to free himself had resulted only in his becoming further entangled, and there he had remained fuming and helpless ever since.

I had with me a small but very efficient pair of wire-cutters which had proved their worth on more than one occasion, and it took me no more than a few minutes to cut him free. Then we wriggled back to the shelter of the wood.

There was nothing heroic about this episode; it was no more dangerous than the ordinary daily round and common task of those hectic days above the Somme, but Cunningham chose to consider that I had saved his life. As a matter of fact I suppose I had, but it was those very efficient little wire-cutters he had to thank and the good luck that brought them with me.

With his arm in a sling he was of little use as a fighting soldier for the two or three weeks it took the bone to set, but he refused to go farther back than the transport lines and insisted on coming up to occupy a listening post we had established on the outskirts of Guillemont. He spoke German fluently, and on more than one occasion we had enjoyed a good laugh at some tit-bit of Teutonic humour he had overheard while lying inside the German wire.

Corps Headquarters in due season heard of this accomplishment and inevitably they took him from us. The Colonel fought a gallant rear-guard action to defend our rights and, nobly backed up by the Brigadier, put down a heavy barrage of indignant chits on headquarters. But it was all in vain. Cunningham received orders to report to Corps Intelligence for duty at the prisoners' cage in the interrogation of prisoners.

After two years of trench warfare most men would have jumped at the chance of the comparative safety and luxurious comfort of headquarters life; but not so Cunningham. But orders were orders; he had to go. We gave him a great send-off and besought him half-seriously

not to forget us when he was a brass-hatted general with rows of decorations, for like most infants we were firmly convinced that the farther one went from the line, the greater became one's chances of promotion and honours.

And so he departed for the august portals of Corps H.Q., and as though to emphasize the gulf that had now come between us, a large green staff car came to fetch him away. We did see him again, however, for twice he visited us when we were back in rest, and occasionally one of us drawing money from the Field Cashier ran into him in the little market town behind our front. Then the Division was shifted northwards to another Corps and we lost sight of him for good.

The history of our battalion from that time onwards did not differ materially from that of any other. We went into the line for our tours of duty and we came back for our rests; we tramped out of Arras one day over seven hundred strong and returned three days later with a little under two hundred; we had one glorious fortnight in a sleepy village in the back area where we lay on our backs by a stream in the sunshine and had new-laid eggs and cream for breakfast; then new faces crowded in on us and we marched out again at full strength towards the old familiar rumble. Christmas 1917 came and went and with it rumours of a great German spring offensive.

It is unnecessary to repeat the story of that great attack: it is now a matter of history that all may read. My own part in it was short and ignominious. I remember days of anxious waiting—surely the most trying of all a soldier's jobs—and I remember being awakened in the small hours by a tremendous cannonade and muttering to myself: "Thank God it's come at last!" as I felt for my flashlight and scrambled off the wire-netting bunk.

Outside it was cold and dark and misty and very noisy. Most of our deeply buried telephone lines had gone already and it was difficult to get any trustworthy information. We stood to in our scattered posts and waited for the deluge.

Dawn came at last, grey and cold and misty, and presently we knew by the lengthening range of the German barrage and the distant clatter of machine-guns that their storm-troops had gone over. But none of us knew what was really happening, though conflicting reports and rumours were plentiful.

After a cup of hot tea I set off to visit some outlying posts and gather if possible some definite information. Some of the posts, I found, had already beaten off one or more attacks; others had not even seen a German. On the face of it, this seemed highly satisfactory, but the clatter of machine-guns, unmistakably German, sounding from two directions well behind our front, gave pause to any hasty optimism. As the newspapers have it, the situation was obscure.

The mist lifted somewhat as the morning advanced, and from a Lewis-gun post above a sunken road I had my first sight that day of the enemy. They were no more than three hundred yards off and streaming towards us, not in closely packed ranks as in earlier offensives, but in little blobs and files.

That particular attack lasted no more than a bare half-hour, and I know from personal observation it suffered heavily. The dozen odd men in the little post were jubilant, but I was not so happy myself. I caught glimpses now and again of those little blobs and files among the folds of the country to right and left. It was clear that several of our posts had been scuppered and that the enemy were steadily penetrating our front by way of the dead ground between those posts which still held out.

I held on for another hour and then decided to send the gun back about half a mile to a place I knew of that commanded a shallow valley where there seemed to be considerable enemy movement.

The post we held must be described, however. A sunken road crossed the side of a hill from the slope of which there was a very good field of fire. Some ten yards from the road a redoubt had been dug on the hill-side and wired all round. In this redoubt was a perpendicular shaft some twelve feet deep leading to a low tunnel which came out on the sunken road behind.

The men went off under the sergeant while I remained to have a last look round. I stayed no more than three minutes at the most; then I slipped my glasses into the case, went down the rough ladder and groped my way along the tunnel. As I came out into the sunken road, stooping to avoid the low lintel, I cannoned into a man standing by the entrance. My eyes were dazzled after the darkness of the tunnel, and thinking the man was Sergeant Rowland, I started cursing him for having left the men; but I stopped suddenly with dropped jaw when I saw that he was wearing a scuttle-shaped helmet and field-grey. An automatic pistol was pressing gently against my ribs, a hand pulled my revolver from the holster, and my share in the great offensive was at an end.

In due course and with many halts and questionings by the way I came at length to a prison camp in northern Bavaria. There life assumed once more an ordered monotony. We took exercise, read what books were to be had, groused about the food, had fierce arguments about trifling matters, found hilarious enjoyment in playing practical jokes on a pompous little German lieutenant of the reserve, took up hobbies with the enthusiasm of schoolboys and dropped them as quickly, separated into cliques, and were intensely bored; in fact it was the same old war—intense monotony but without the periods of excitement and danger.

I became friends with a gunner captain named Benson. He confided to me one day that he had made up his mind to escape; he needed a partner for the venture and thought that I might be the man. I was; and from that moment I ceased to be bored.

Benson had been collecting the necessary kit for some time and by various subterfuges had amassed a treasure consisting of a complete civilian outfit, maps, compass, concentrated food, German money and a pair of home-made wire-cutters. He had been learning German and had made considerable progress; and he was delighted when he found that I too had a smattering of the language. Actually my knowledge was confined to a very limited number of useful phrases I had picked up from Cunningham, but on the other hand I have a good ear for copying sounds, and I had been told on more than one occasion that my accent was very nearly perfect. We proposed to travel by night and avoid all contact with the people of the country, but we hoped our German would be good enough to carry us through a chance encounter.

My first task was to make or acquire a civilian outfit. I succeeded in dyeing a pair of khaki slacks a nondescript colour in a fearsome mixture of ink and boot polish and set about converting a service tunic into a civilian jacket by removing the pockets and buttons.

Benson had already formed the rough outlines of a plan of escape, and the all important details were gradually beginning to fall into place. It will suffice to say that the plan was based upon a very careful study of the routine of the camp and a diversion to be staged by some boisterous spirits at the critical moment. We were confident that helpers for this part of the plan would not be wanting when the time came.

Then just when everything was shaping well, disaster descended upon us. Benson was playing deck-tennis one afternoon on an asphalt pitch, when in jumping for a high ring he slipped and fell. A broken leg takes six weeks or more to mend, and for some time after that he would be in no condition to tackle a long and exhausting march across country.

It could not be helped; we should have to possess our souls in patience and wait till he was fit again. But he would have none of it. He urged me to take his kit and find another partner or carry on by myself. He pointed out that he would probably be sent to the military hospital more than thirty miles away and might never return to that particular camp. In any case it would be impossible for him to smuggle his escaping kit with him, and therefore it was only common sense for me to take it and carry on.

He left the camp that night for hospital. It seemed to me as though the bottom had been knocked out of my world. My one absorbing interest was gone, and in spite of his arguments I had not the heart to carry on without him. For two days I mooned about the camp by my-

self completely at a loose end. I did not try to find another partner; I gave up all idea of attempting to escape. Then chance took a hand.

Half a dozen officers arrived one day to inspect the camp. Such inspections were not infrequent, and we derived considerable amusement from them by watching, and occasionally innocently retarding, the feverish efforts of the camp staff to impress the visitors. On this occasion, however, no untoward incident occurred, but in the course of my prowling round the camp later that afternoon I chanced to pass close by the Kommandantur and saw through the open door the caps and greatcoats of the inspecting officers hanging in a row on the pegs in the passage. Evidently the visitors had stayed on for a drink and possibly a meal.

I passed on slowly but with my heart beating like a hammer, for it had come to me suddenly that in one of those coats and caps I would have a sporting chance of marching unchallenged out of the camp.

After Benson's departure I had given up all idea of escape, and I acted now on the spur of the moment. I turned and came back slowly, whistling and with my hands in my pockets. I gave one quick glance round and shot up the steps. My luck was in: the passage was empty. It would have been madness to have attempted to carry the clothes across the open square in broad daylight, but there was a window in the passage giving on to a small waste piece of ground backed by a high wall. I opened the window quietly, took the coat and cap from the nearest peg, and threw them out. Then I closed the window and slipped back down the steps.

The whole operation had taken less than half a minute. I was jubilant; but I had yet to retrieve the coat and cap from the waste ground and convey them to some place where I could put them on after I had changed into civilian clothes. What had been done had been done on the spur of the moment, and I had no plan, but as I strolled along thinking matters over, chance came again to my aid.

Two British orderlies from the adjacent 'Tommies' camp were crossing the square carrying a large laundry basket between them. I knew one of the men to be a good fellow who would probably be willing to help, and I turned slightly to the right so that our courses converged. "If you want to do me a good turn," I said quietly as we came near, "follow me and say nothing." The good fellow gave me one intelligent look and followed without a word. I strolled round the angle of the main building and up the side, where I was out of sight of the square, to the door of the waste piece of ground. The two orderlies with the basket followed me through.

Under the frosted glass window lay the coat and cap. I picked them up and began to whisper a word of explanation to the two orderlies.

but at the sight of the German uniform, Read, the fellow I knew, just grinned and lifted the cover of the basket without a word. I pushed the coat and cap inside.

"March across past the back of the latrine by the side gate," I whispered; "but give me a minute to get there first." The two men grinned again and nodded, and with a word of thanks I strolled off towards the latrine.

As luck would have it, no one was there, though it hardly mattered, since none of my fellow prisoners would have given me away. I waited till I heard the orderlies' footsteps at the back and then I went out. The little building screened the spot from the rest of the square, though one of the sentries on the wire fence was in sight. Fortunately he had his back turned, and in a moment I had whipped the cap and coat from the laundry basket and shot back into the latrines. The orderlies, admirable fellows, continued imperturbably on their way.

I hid my spoil behind a cistern and strolled back as casually as I could to the main building. Up in my room I retrieved poor old Benson's escaping kit from its various hiding-places, put on the civilian clothes and pulled on my uniform over the top, while Grey, the only one of my room-mates who happened to be present, looked on with interest.

"Heading for home?" he asked laconically at last. I nodded as I stuffed the maps in an inside pocket. "Want any help?" I told him I would be grateful if he could manage to cover my absence from the evening appel or roll-call so as to give me as big a start as possible. He promised to see to it.

I had decided that the best time to make the attempt was at dusk when the daylight was failing and the big arcs surrounding the camp were still unlighted. The German is a most orderly animal, as I have proved to my own satisfaction more than once during the course of the war; the camp lights were switched on every night three-quarters of an hour after sunset to the minute, and I knew that if I timed my attempt ten minutes earlier, I should run no danger of being caught by the lights.

Unfortunately there was still half an hour to go, and I was in a fever of impatience. That half-hour was the longest I ever spent. Every moment I expected to hear the uproar that would announce that the visiting officers had finished their tippling and had discovered the loss of the coat and cap. But the longest wait must have an end and at last it was time to go.

Grey went with me. Trying to look as unconcerned as possible, we strolled slowly across to the latrines. As luck would have it they were empty. I tore off my uniform and put on the German greatcoat and cap. I had the maps, food, compass and money bestowed in various

pockets of my civilian clothes; a trilby hat was rolled up in my trouser pocket. Grey gave me a final look over to see that all was well, pulled the cap to a more rakish angle, and as a final touch stuck his watch-glass in my eye as a monocle. Then he went out to see if the coast was clear, for we were close to the side gate and it would never do for the sentry there to see a German officer issuing from the prisoners' latrines.

I stood in the shadow of the entrance and waited, trying hard to keep calm; waiting is always so much more difficult than action. Perhaps a minute went by, or maybe two, and then at last I heard him call that the sentry's back was turned. It was now or never.

I stepped out from my shelter, gave him a wink as I passed and headed for the gate.

My heart was beating like a hammer, but I strutted along with a lord-of-all-creation air and tried to look as Prussian as I could. The sentry did not see me till I was close on the gate, and then for a moment he did nothing. I thought that he had recognized me and that the game was up; but suddenly he came to life and began to fumble with the lock. I stared at him coldly through my monocle, which combined with my stony silence and haughty air seemed to fluster him so that he took a long time to open the gate. Meanwhile I was in a cold fear that the man would recognize me.

At last he had the gate open. I passed through; but there still remained the gate in the outer wire to be opened, and he fumbled badly with that too. It was really a comic situation, for the poor man was even more scared than I was. But the second gate also was open at last, and I passed through it with a lordly acknowledgement of the sentry's salute.

The camp was surrounded by woods, and my first impulse was to dive for the shelter of the undergrowth; but I realized that my only chance of avoiding recapture was to get beyond them before my escape was discovered, for once a cordon were thrown around the woods, escape from them would be difficult. Therefore I walked down the road at a moderate pace till I was out of sight of the camp; then I dived in among the undergrowth, tore off the German coat and cap with feverish haste, put on the trilby, and emerged as an inconspicuous civilian. The road would take me beyond the woods more quickly than a winding woodland path, and as time was the all-important factor, I set off along the road again at my best speed.

I did not breathe really freely till I came to the end of the trees and saw the open sky above me. I took a deep breath then, pulled out my map and compass and set a course by the stars. I kept going steadily all night, skirting the villages, and by dawn when I lay up in a copse to sleep, I had put many miles between myself and the camp.

There is no need to give the details of that nightmare march, for a

nightmare it became after the first few days. I marched at night and slept in hiding during the day. Twice at dusk I bought food in village shops, and I tried to mask any imperfections of language and accent by tying a handkerchief round my face and feigning toothache.

I was heading for the Dutch frontier on the course Benson and I had worked out together, but by the ninth day I had begun to wonder if I would ever make it. The cold nights, exposure to bad weather, and the poor food had tried my strength severely, and the wire fence guarding the Dutch frontier, which we had so cheerfully decided could present no real obstacle to determined men, seemed to grow more formidable with every mile I travelled.

One morning just before dawn as I dropped exhausted in the shelter of a wood, I knew that I could never reach the frontier now on foot. But I told myself that I was not done yet. The Rhine was only a few miles off, and if I could reach the river and find a Dutch bargee, it might be possible to bribe the man to smuggle me across the frontier in his barge. I was happier after that decision and I slept like a log all day.

I reached the river the following night after a comparatively easy march and began my search for a Dutch barge. But I failed to find one. A few German barges were moored along the bank—the port of registration painted on each told their nationality—but no Dutch.

While I lay in hiding the next day I did some hard thinking. A short distance lower down the river lay Cologne with large docks and many barges, and among them surely at least one Dutch. It was unfortunate that the city and the docks were on the opposite bank of the river and to reach them I should have to cross a bridge, but that was a risk I was prepared to face. If the bridge were guarded it would be foolish to attempt to cross it at night when a few wayfarers were about, but during the day I hoped it might be possible to slip across unchallenged among the crowd.

On the following morning I walked boldly into that suburb of Cologne that stands on the east bank of the river. I walked with a stiff leg and very square shoulders, as I thought that the role of a discharged wounded soldier was the best to adopt; and with my worn face and clothes hanging loosely about my emaciated body I must have looked the part to perfection.

A little short of the bridge I came upon a group of people waiting on the pavement. A tramcar rattled up as I pushed my way among them and I was carried forward with the rush. Acting on the impulse of the moment, I climbed inside and took my seat with the rest. Several of the passengers read newspapers and paid their fares in silence, and when the conductress came to me, I held out a few pfennigs as the others had done and received my ticket without having to utter a word.

The tram rumbled on over the great bridge, and a few minutes later I got down unmolested in the shadow of the great cathedral.

After my long solitude it was a strange and exciting experience to find myself walking the streets of a busy city, but no one of that hurrying throng took any notice of me, and as time passed my confidence grew. I searched along the river bank and the docks for a Dutch barge and found three, but each had many men about her loading or unloading, and it would have been suicidal to have approached a skipper there in broad daylight and put him to the test. I therefore decided to return after dark and try to creep aboard unseen.

I went back into the town and wandered about the busy streets. The fine shops fascinated me; it was many months since I had seen anything bigger than a village store, and I lingered in front of the plateglass windows like an urchin on Christmas Eve.

I was standing on the busy pavement of the Hohestrasse outside a cigar shop wondering if it would be foolish to risk asking for a packet of cigarettes, when without apparent reason I became acutely aware of two men standing near me. One tall and the other short, both dressed in civilian clothes, they had stopped for a moment to look at the shop window. Something vaguely familiar in the bearing of one of them fixed my attention. The shorter of the two had already turned away, and as the other followed him, he looked in my direction and our eyes met.

Recognition is as swift as the fastest camera shutter and may be equally revealing. It was Cunningham. I was taken completely by surprise, but I flatter myself that I gave no more than a slight start. As for Cunningham, not an eyelid flickered, not a muscle of his face moved, nor did he arrest the turning of his head for the fraction of a second; only the momentary spark in his eye betrayed his recognition. He went off beside his companion, chatting in German as though he had seen nothing.

That sight of Cunningham heartened me. It was comforting to know that there was even one fellow-countryman of mine in this great city. If he could play so gallantly his dangerous game, of which the penalty of failure was death, it would be shameful for me to falter in a game for lower stakes. I congratulated myself that I had made no sudden exclamation, and I was glad that his companion's back had been turned at the moment of recognition, for even my slight start might have given us away. I realized then the self-control and courage needed by the successful spy. My own wanderings as a fugitive had given me some inkling of the utter loneliness of the work and of the self-reliance needed for the part.

I wandered down to the river-side again, and as I stood in the dusk gazing out across the water, a man came and leant on the rail beside

me. It was the one thing I had been afraid of—that some loiterer would try to get into conversation with me; but as I turned hastily to move away I caught a glimpse of his profile. It was Cunningham's.

"Oh, it's you," I said with relief.

He nodded.

"Is this safe?" I asked. "I don't want to get you in a mess."

He looked at me curiously. "How do you mean?" he asked.

"Well—I'm only an escaped prisoner," I said, "and if I'm caught it's the prisoners-of-war camp again; but for you. . . ." I laughed shortly. "I suppose it would be the traditional firing-squad at dawn."

He gave me an odd look that made me feel like an ingénue at a party who has said the wrong thing. I suppose Intelligence men have their own etiquette of what is good luck and what is bad luck, like air-men, and after all it was only natural that a reference to a firing-squad at dawn should be one of the things that was not "done." Anyway, I felt a fool.

"So you have escaped from a prison camp, have you! Stout fellow!" he said in the old friendly manner. "Tell me about it." I told him. "You've had a rough time," he commented at the end. "It must have taken a bit of guts."

"Guts!" I echoed. "You to talk of guts! Why, half an hour of your job would reduce me to a nervous wreck."

He let that pass without comment, nor did he volunteer any information about his job or his life since he left his comfortable Intelligence post behind the lines for the hazardous one there in Germany. And I did not question him. I had heard enough about Intelligence to know that agents worked so secretly that often they did not know one another even.

He asked me about my future plans. I told him of my original intention and of my change of plan. He thought I was wise to have abandoned the idea of footing it to Holland. The frontier was closely watched and guarded by live wire in places; without special knowledge of the district I would have hardly stood a chance. But he shook his head over the other plan also. Of course there were Dutch bargees who would be willing to smuggle an escaped prisoner across the frontier, but there must be many more who would not take the risk. My difficulty would be to find the right man; if I approached the wrong one first I should be in the cart.

I asked what he advised. He was silent for a few moments. "I think I can help you," he said at last. "You had better come to my rooms for the night while I arrange it. You will be all right there."

I said I had no intention of adding to the obvious risks he ran, but he laughed and assured me it would be all right. "I owe you something, anyway," he said. "If you wander about Cologne all night, someone will

talk to you, and then the game will be up. And besides you are in no fit condition to do that; what you need is a square meal and a bed. But I must see that the coast is clear first. Meanwhile, I advise you to keep on the move; I'll be back in half an hour." And with that he turned and left me.

I kept on the move as he had advised, and returned to the spot on the river bank as soon as the half-hour was up. But there was no sign of Cunningham. He was, I knew, a man of his word, and as the minutes went by without his putting in an appearance, my anxiety can be imagined.

Exhaustion can play strange tricks with the most equable temperament. After my meeting with Cunningham and his offer of help I had soared from a state not far removed from despair to one of rosy optimism; now I was sliding rapidly back again. Something had gone amiss; not only did I see that promised square meal recede into the distance and the prison camp loom near, but I heard in imagination the very volley that would end Cunningham's career. All this because he had delayed ten minutes beyond the appointed time. It will be seen that I was pretty near the end of my tether.

He came at last, and gave some explanation of his delay which I failed to hear in my joy at seeing him. He told me the coast was clear; he would go ahead and I was to follow a few paces behind. In this way we went back into the town, up one of the main streets, down a side turning and in through an open door. He led me up a short flight of stairs and through a small hall to a comfortably furnished room. After locking the door he put food and wine before me and sat smoking his pipe while I ate. And how I ate.

Afterwards we talked of old times, of the old battalion and of days in France. Then I had a glorious hot bath and he put me into a little bedroom opening off the hall. It was a spare room, he said, and was never used. He would be out all night, but he would lock the door and I would be quite safe. A woman would come in to tidy up in the morning, but she would not trouble me. My room had always been kept locked, and if I kept quiet she would not know I was there. He could not say exactly when he could give me breakfast—as though that mattered—but he gave me a loaf and some meat in case I was hungry. Then with a cheery good-night he closed and locked the door. I heard him go out some minutes later.

Contrary to expectations I did not sleep well; the bed was too soft and comfortable after my spell of hard lying, but I dropped off before dawn and awoke to hear the woman bustling about the flat. After she had gone, I dressed and ate some of the meat and bread.

I found it dull sitting there in that little room and I wished that Cunningham had thought of locking the door on the inside instead of

on the outside, so that I could have gone into the other room and amused myself with the German illustrated papers I had seen there the night before. Except for a floor rug, a chair, a cupboard and a bed, the room was bare. It amused me, however, to think that an English Intelligence man should have his own flat in Cologne and even a spare room in which to entertain his fellow-countrymen. In the cupboard I found a bag with an old label for Berlin and the name H. von Goburg written on it in Cunningham's handwriting. That too was amusing—but a grim jest for him if it were seen through.

It was nearly midday when he returned. He apologized for keeping me shut up so long, but said he had not been idle. And indeed he had not.

It was, as he had said, almost impossible to get across the Dutch frontier if one did not know the ropes, but on the other hand it was a fairly simple matter for those who did. Actually the frontier was crossed pretty frequently by smugglers and others, and to cut a long story short, he had arranged for one who was an expert at the game to take me over that night. I was to catch the evening train to Aachen where he would hand me over to the frontier expert. Before dawn I would be on Dutch soil.

He brushed aside my objections to his coming with me; the risk to himself, he said, was negligible, and with my limited knowledge of German I could not possibly risk the journey alone. And besides it was all arranged.

So I thanked him gratefully and sat down to the excellent cold meal he had prepared.

He had to be busy all that afternoon again, but before he went he handed me a suit from his wardrobe and put me back into my little room. "We can't have you looking too much like a tramp," he laughed. I suggested he might let me have the run of the flat, but he said that was too risky as the woman had a key. So back I went to the little room and was locked in.

It was good to feel well dressed again. Cunningham and I were much the same size and the suit was a tolerably good fit. His *nom de guerre*, H. von Goburg, was written on the tab of the jacket below the name of a Berlin tailor. Now at least the cut of my clothes could not give me away.

Somehow I whiled away that interminable time of waiting. I had brought with me the German illustrated papers and they helped. The captions were not easy to follow, but the rather low humour of the pictures was obvious enough.

It was nearly eight o'clock when he returned. I laughed aloud when he opened the door, for he was dressed in the uniform of a German officer and looked a typical Prussian. He said it would save us from being

bothered by petty officials. I laughed again and reminded him that I had adopted the same plan at the prison camp and with satisfactory results.

He had a taxi waiting outside, so that we drove to the station in style, and all the way I was grinning to myself at the thought of what the people on the crowded pavements would have said if they had known who we really were. He carried the whole thing off magnificently: he paid the taximan with a lordly air and marched up the platform to a first-class carriage with just the right swagger. Two other people were in the compartment, but they did not worry us. I sat undisturbed in my corner and pretended to read the magazine he had bought me.

The journey to Aachen was short and passed off without incident. Cunningham's uniform brought him salutes and respect, and carried us through the barrier without question. We walked from the station through the lighted streets of the town and out along a country road. Away to the left a lighted tramcar moved slowly on its way; ahead the red and green signal lights of a railway glowed through the darkness.

I remember feeling strangely unreal; it seemed absurd that this commonplace road could lead to freedom.

A man lounging by a gateway gave us a good-night as we passed. Cunningham halted suddenly and gripped my hand. "Follow him," he whispered with a nod towards the dark figure. "He will see you through. Good-bye." And before I had recovered from my surprise he was several yards away striding back down the road.

That was the last I ever saw of Cunningham. I dared not call out or run after him. I could only turn sadly towards the dark figure by the gate. All my elation at the nearness of success had left me; it seemed a shameful thing that I should go on towards safety and freedom while he who had arranged it all was striding through the darkness back to his lonely, dangerous work.

The man by the gate turned without a word as I approached. He led me by a large dark house and through a hedge at the end of a long garden. After that we went very cautiously, sometimes we crawled, and once we lay still while two men passed close to us. Then we halted beyond a ditch on the edge of a small field. I could distinguish a narrow footpath winding towards a low building with one dimly lighted window.

I was just wondering when we should reach the wire and how we would cross it, when my guide put his lips to my ear and spoke for the first time. "You are now in Holland," he said. "Go straight ahead to the house." And before I could ask a question or even thank him he had turned and disappeared back the way we had come.

I shall not try to describe my feeling at that moment or the many

little kindnesses of the friendly Dutch guards at the little house when they had satisfied themselves that I was really an escaped prisoner of war. I had a great reception from many British residents in Holland and from the British authorities to whom I reported. Everyone treated me as though I were a hero, and I felt very mean in taking all the credit to myself, for I thought it would be most unwise to mention Cunningham to anyone except an accredited Intelligence Officer. Madison, the one man I gathered I could have spoken freely to, was on leave in London and I did not see any of the higher Embassy officials.

One of the juniors came to the station to see me off for England, and as we stood chatting by the carriage door he said: "Madison will want to see you when you get to Town. He will be interested to hear you have been in Cologne." Then with a quick glance round and lowered voice he went on: "His department have had a spot of bother in that region lately. Two of our people have gone silent—and have disappeared."

A sudden chill came over me as I realized the meaning of his words; I thought of Cunningham back there in the centre of the danger. "You mean . . . ?" I began.

He nodded. "I'm afraid so. You see, the Huns have got a new man on counter-espionage in that area. A pretty live wire from all accounts. They say he's played the game himself behind our lines and knows every move. . . ." Then he added brightly as the train began to move: "A dangerous bloke—von Goburg is his name, Captain von Goburg, blast him! Well, good-bye, and good luck."



J. STORER CLOUSTON

I have always been a pushover for ship and train stories; not so much sea stories and railroad stories, in the usual sense, but mystery stories with a background of railway coaches or shipboard life. When the field of operations is narrowed for an investigator by the severe limitations of such a setting, it seems to me the interest is more intense, the suspense more intimate and even personal, than when he has a whole worldful of suspects from which to choose. J. Storer Clouston has made skilful use of this perhaps universal weakness in his clever comedy of six men shut up in a railway coach together, in war time, with the talk running on enemy spies—while the conviction mounts that one of their number is not everything he pretends to be. The pace is as fast as the train, the story is told almost wholly in dialogue, the opportunities for reader-detection are plausibly presented, and the conclusion is swift, unexpected, and satisfying. What more can one ask of an author? Mr. Clouston, an old timer at the mystification business, is a well known English writer, best known perhaps for his humorous novel, *The Lunatic at Large*.

THE ENVELOPE

"**B**Y GAD!" exclaimed the General, "this is deuced different from travelling on the Highland line before the war!"

"Very, sir," the young Guardsman agreed.

"You know this country then?"

"I sometimes used to shoot at a place in Sutherlandshire, sir."

"Well," said the General, a stout affable warrior with a row of ribbons on his broad chest, "except when I was in India, I've shot and fished in Scotland every year since I was a boy. How many times I've been up and down this Highland line I'd be afraid to say; and, by Jove, what a contrast now!"

"Just what I was thinking, sir," smiled the young officer.

"Not a lady to be seen!" continued the General. "Not a keeper, not a dog; not a gun or a rod or any other mortal thing one used to see here. Everybody's in uniform; and by Gad, even then you've got to get a pass like a ticket-of-leave man! The piping days of peace seem far enough away; what?"

One of the two young Australians at the other end of the carriage took his cigar out of his mouth and joined in the conversation. There

was none of the Guardsman's well-drilled air of deference about this young man. His manner was engagingly frank and direct.

"This is my first trip to the Highlands of Scotland," said he, "and a mighty nice country to go fishing and shooting in it looks. I suppose the whole place used just to be crawling with tourists and sportsmen and guys collecting butterflies and birds' eggs. Not much Prohibited Area about it then, I guess!"

"The rummiest thing about the whole show," put in the R.N.R. Lieutenant, "is not being able to get a drink whenever you want. Just fancy being in the home of whisky and having to wet your whistle with teal!"

There were these five officers in the carriage: the burly conversational General; the two young Australians—one, who had just spoken, tall and thin with very black hair and a long nose; the other, a quieter young man, of the fair, blue-eyed, stolid type; the R.N.R. Lieutenant, a plain-looking freckled man with a wide mouth; and the young Guardsman, with a captain's stars and the Grenadier's cap-band, spruce and slender, a type of the "pukka" army officer. And there was also one civilian, a quiet-looking man with a beard, who had begun by joining in the general conversation, mentioning incidentally that he was an official of the Board of Agriculture travelling on business, and then had put on a pair of spectacles and become deeply immersed in a mass of papers, apparently official correspondence. A small blotting-pad lay on his knee, and every now and then he seemed to be scribbling notes with a fountain pen.

The six had found themselves together in this first-class compartment after passengers from the South had changed trains at Inverness and passed the barrier at the southern limit of the Military Area.

"What's the use in this Prohibited Area anyhow?" demanded the tall Australian. "Seems to me it gives a peaceful fighting man a lot of trouble for no particular object I can see."

The General laughed in his bluff way.

"They evidently don't think all fighting men are peaceful," said he.

"Yes, but see here, sir," argued the R.N.R. Lieutenant, "it seems to me all very well for civilians to have passports, but isn't the King's uniform a good enough passport?"

The General coughed discreetly, pursed his lips, and then, like one revealing a little more than he had any business to, said—

"I may tell you I had a talk with a somewhat important police official in Edinburgh, and he says that the King's uniform has more than once been the passport for quite the wrong sort of gentleman."

"Black sheep in wolf's clothing," suggested the tall Australian.

The others laughed, all except the civilian, who still seemed absorbed in his papers, and the Guardsman, who murmured—

"What a beastly idea! I didn't know that game was being played in this country."

"I assure you it is," said the General emphatically. "At least, I have the very best authority possible. That's why they're so damned particular about these passports. By Jove, they looked at mine so long, I began to think they were going to arrest me!" He turned to the civilian and inquired, "I suppose even Government officials have got to go through the same thing?"

The man with the beard looked up and nodded.

"They don't let any of us off," said he. "In fact, a civilian's passport—even if he be an official—is a much more complicated affair than a soldier's."

"In other words," said the General shrewdly, "a soldier's passport is probably easier to fake."

Again the Board of Agriculture official nodded.

"In all probability that's an added advantage of travelling in uniform," said he.

"Meaning if one is the kind of black sheep we were speaking of!" said the sailor. "Well, I suppose there's something in that."

The General was evidently an optimist at heart.

"There's such an infernal lot of exaggeration in everything one hears nowadays," he declared, "that personally I take what my friend in the police told me with a grain of salt. Forging a passport and all the rest of it isn't such an easy game. Gad, I wouldn't like to play it myself!"

"And what is there to be learned when one does get into this Military Area place?" asked the fair Australian. "It doesn't look to me as though there was much to be seen so far."

"Two naval bases—Cromarty and Scapa," said the Guardsman.

"And the north-west corner of Scotland is said to have possibilities for the undesirable visitor," added the Government official, looking up quickly from his papers.

The fair Australian stretched himself, and laughed.

"I thought there were only mountains and stags out that way!"

"So there are—inland," said the General. "Grand deer-stalking country too!"

He turned to the Guardsman and launched forth into sporting reminiscences, while the young officers listened, and the civilian went on jotting down notes, till at last, at one of the incessant stations, the breezy General jumped up and cried—

"Hullo! I ought to get out here!"

It was an old-fashioned carriage, with no corridor, and, besides the six passengers, its contents seemed to be chiefly the General's belongings. Two of his bags were on the seats, and more loaded the rack. The Grenadier Captain lent a hand in clearing this collection on to the

platform, and, to make room, the civilian stepped out, strolled a few paces along the train, and stood by waiting. A couple of minutes later they were off again.

"We've got a little more room now," said the civilian, pulling a small suit-case from under the seat and placing it beside him.

"Our friend, the brass-hat, pretty well filled the whole place," laughed the tall Australian; "I guess I'll make myself a little more comfortable too."

There was a general movement in the carriage, each of the five either shifting his seat or moving his belongings. The Grenadier and the two Australians put on their overcoats, and the Government official took a rug from a bundle and threw it over his knees. As they all settled down at last, the tall Australian remarked—

"Well, thank God, one can stretch one's legs at——"

He meant, it seemed, to have added "last," but his speech was arrested in the midst. He caught the Grenadier's eye and then the civilian's. Each had seen the same thing. It was the Australian who picked it up from the floor—a torn and crumpled envelope, but the writing on it singularly legible.

"Here's a queer address to find in the Prohibited Area!" said he with a short laugh.

The civilian and the Grenadier were now sitting in corners opposite to one another, and he held out the envelope so that both could read it. Over his shoulder the fair Australian and the R.N.R. Lieutenant were reading it too. Of the name, only the last syllable "stein" remained, and below it was the address, "Königstrasse 13, Köln."

For a moment nobody spoke, and then the sailor asked—

"Anybody here claim this pretty thing?"

But nobody answered him.

"Geel!" exclaimed the tall Australian suddenly, "it must have been dropped by old brass-hat!"

The Grenadier answered quickly and warmly—

"Never! That was General Fawkes-Turing! He didn't know me, of course, but I knew him well enough. He's absolutely above suspicion!"

"Suspicion!" said the fair Australian. "You really call this suspicious then?"

"Don't you?"

Again nobody spoke for a moment, and then in a quiet, rather hesitating voice, the civilian said—

"I suppose, perhaps, the fact that nobody acknowledges it, does—er—seem a little odd."

"There's nothing inside the envelope," said the fair Australian; "it's just a dirty scrap of paper."

"That's what started us into this war, my son!" said his friend. "Scraps of paper have taken a new lease of life since August 1914. Still, there'd be nothing so very much in this scrap to incriminate a fellow—if it wasn't, as this gentleman remarked, that nobody is willing to acknowledge it."

"Couldn't it have been in the carriage all the time?" suggested the R.N.R. Lieutenant—"under the seat, for instance?"

The tall Australian looked round the carriage at each in turn, and then at the envelope.

"I suppose it's quite possible," said he slowly.

"But you mean we can hardly take it for granted?" asked the civilian in the same diffident voice.

The other gave a short laugh.

"Well, if you put it like that——"

"Oh, I only supposed you meant that!" said the civilian hurriedly.

There was another pause, and then the Grenadier said—

"We were all moving about the carriage. It's quite clear we can't tell who dropped this thing."

"Assuming any of us did," added the fair Australian.

"My son," said his tall friend, "that's the only derved assumption we can go on, just at present anyhow, till we get things cleared up a bit."

He looked round the company, and then as the others seemed to be waiting instinctively for his opinion, he went on—

"There are just three possible solutions, seems to me. Either old brass-hat did drop this, whatever his name is——"

"Impossible!" reiterated the Guardsman warmly.

"Excuse me, my friend," said the other soothingly, "there's no point in getting gingery. The old boy may have had something wrapped up in it. It says nothing against him, seeing that he hasn't denied owning it. We've got to reckon on the chance of this being a mare's nest, just as we've got to reckon on the chance of the other thing."

"Hear, hear!" said the sailor, beginning to fill a pipe.

"I see," agreed the Guardsman. "Yes, of course that's possible. "Still

"I'm coming to that 'still,'" smiled the Australian. "Well now, that's the first solution. The second is, that it was in the carriage before any of us got in at Inverness. And the third is, that one of us dropped it and won't own up. Well now, with those three solutions all open, what can we damned well do?"

"I quite see," said the civilian. "Yes, that puts the matter very well. And so you say you propose to go on the only assumption possible?"

"I'm just putting the case to the company. It's not for me to propose."

"Oh, I was only thinking of what you said before," said the Board of Agriculture official hurriedly. "But of course if you think we ought to go on any other assumption—well—er—certainly suggest one."

"I certainly don't suggest anything different from what I said before," replied the Australian emphatically.

"And what did you suggest before?" asked the sailor.

"This gentleman seems to be taking down my remarks in shorthand," said the Australian, nodding towards the Agricultural official, with a pleasantly ironical smile, and yet with something significant in his eye as it rested on the civilian's papers and writing-pad.

"Oh no, I assure you this is merely a little official correspondence," said the civilian with what seemed meant for a laugh. "I speak merely from recollection of this officer's remarks. They seemed to be very reasonable."

The Grenadier cut in abruptly—

"I say that we must obviously all regard ourselves as under suspicion."

"Precisely," said the tall Australian, "that's exactly my point. I say that's the only safe assumption in the meanwhile. The question is—what are we to do?"

"Supposing I arrest you, and this gentleman arrests me, and so on till we all arrest each other?" suggested the R.N.R. Lieutenant.

There was only half a laugh from the Australians and the civilian, and the Grenadier never even smiled. Evidently the situation struck them all as having passed the jesting stage. Their eyes wandered furtively from one to another of their companions, and—so far as their expressions revealed their minds—the same thought seemed to be equally behind each glance—"There is probably a spy in this carriage."

Once again the tall Australian broke the silence.

"Some one's got to speak out," said he, "and I'll begin. What do we know of each other? That's the first question. Well, my name's Mackay and my friend here is called Sutherland; or at least he says he is. We only met at King's Cross Station, but he says he knows some of my folk out in Sydney and I happen to know some of his—that's to say, if they are the Sutherlands he says they are. If his tale is a true bill, I can answer for his people being as good citizens and fine folk as any in Australia. While if his tale isn't true, well, all I can say is he's a kind of magician, for what he doesn't seem to know about Sydney and the Sydney Sutherlands isn't worth knowing."

He looked towards his fellow Australian, who nodded and said—

"That's all right. That's just what I told him, and of course you've only my word that it's true. And all I can say about him is pretty much the same thing. I know his Mackay people out at home—or some of them anyhow, and better folk don't breathe. And we've talked lots

since we left King's Cross, and nothing he has said has contradicted anything I know."

"And I may just add," put in the other, "that both our folks came originally from this part of the world—as you can tell by our names—and we are both on leave and going to look up some of the old people. There's a cousin of my father, an old minister up in Sutherlandshire. And he's got far out relations there too, I understand."

"That's right," nodded the fair man. "They are farming folk of some kind."

The sailor took up the tale next.

"My name's Matthews," said he, "and I'm going up to join a ship at Scapa. I'd tell you her name, only it's against the regulations; and in fact, looking to the present situation and seeing that some one is under suspicion. I can't break through them on this occasion. I've no pals to bear me out, but that's my sworn statement—for what it's worth."

"I'm in the same boat," said the Guardsman. "I can only say that my name's Hillary, and that I'm in the Grenadier Guards. I'm going up to Scapa too, to put in a week's leave in my cousin's ship, but for the same reasons I can't very well even mention her name."

The civilian spoke last.

"My name's Walters," said he, "and as I mentioned before, I'm an official of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland travelling on official business. Like the last two gentlemen who spoke, I am without witnesses to my identity."

Again there was a pause, and again it was broken by the tall Australian.

"Well," he said, "here we are all together, and if one of us is a spy, well, he can't do much spying just for the moment!"

"Yes, I quite see what you mean," agreed the civilian; "I suppose it really wouldn't do to part company till we make sure."

"He didn't quite say that!" exclaimed the sailor. "Damn it, how could we manage it, all going to different places?"

"Oh, I only thought that was the suggestion," said Mr. Walters hurriedly.

"It's the only thing to be done," said Captain Hillary abruptly.

"Precisely," agreed the tall Australian. "The only difficulty is, how are we to arrange?"

"Where do you get out?" asked the Guardsman.

"Place called Lairg." The tall Australian turned to his companion and added, "You meant to stop not far off there, didn't you?"

"One station beyond," said the fair man, "but getting out at Lairg would make no odds. I can manage that."

"As I was saying, I'm bound for Scapa," said Matthews, "but I can't

ask you chaps to go on all that way, and if they don't like my turning up a day late, well, they'll just have to lump it! It's a good enough excuse, I reckon. I'll stop at Lairg too."

"So will I," said the Guardsman briefly.

There was a moment's pause while they all looked at Walters.

"Oh, I think I can manage to go on to Lairg," he said after an instant's reflection. "But what do you propose to do when we get there?"

"Well," said Mackay, the tall man, "I suppose we'd better wire the situation to Inverness or somewhere, and just wait at Lairg for instructions."

"That's it," said Matthews, and Hillary nodded approval.

The civilian also nodded, but more thoughtfully, and almost—it seemed—a trifle absently; and he said nothing. The other Australian seemed satisfied also, and now that the arrangement was made, silence fell upon the carriage.

It had been a day of heavy clouds with a gusty wind, and the short afternoon merged early into evening; while, in the spell of absolute silence, the gusts seemed to have risen into squalls, and filled the carriage with constant little sounds. Lieutenant Matthews sucked at his pipe, the two Australians seemed immersed in illustrated papers, Mr. Walters continued to glance through his official correspondence, and the Guardsman smoked a cigarette and stared out of the window. None of the five so much as looked at one another.

Suddenly Mr. Walters looked up from his papers and exclaimed—

"I am very sorry, gentlemen, to seem to back out of what we have arranged, but I have just realised that my official duties really won't permit of my going through to Lairg to-night. I am afraid I must get out at Tain. I can give you, however, every assurance that no suspicion can possibly attach to me. As I told you, I am a Government official, and surely that should be a pretty good guarantee."

He looked towards the Australians as he spoke, and then—a little anxiously one would think—at the R.N.R. Lieutenant. These three exchanged glances, and all seemed to hesitate for a moment. The tall Australian spoke first.

"Well," he said, "if you are really travelling on Government business, Mr. Walters—and mind you I don't doubt it—I think that perhaps we might make an exception and raise no objection under the circumstances."

"If the gentleman gives us his word, I'd be quite willing to agree with you," said Matthews.

Sutherland, the fair Australian, nodded, and added—

"I'd feel quite satisfied to risk it."

"Thank you, gentlemen, thank you very much," said the civilian gratefully, and turned towards Hillary.

The Guardsman shook his head suddenly and firmly.

"I'm very sorry," he said shortly, "and please don't think I suggest any suspicion, but we've made this arrangement, and I'm afraid I shall have to call the guard at once if any one leaves the train before Lairg—just as I should expect you to do if I tried to leave."

For a moment there was an awkward pause, and then Matthews began—

"This seems a bit hard on the gentleman if he has really got business——"

Mr. Walters interrupted hastily—

"Not a bit; not at all; I quite see Captain Hillary's point. It will be a little awkward for me, but rather than raise any difficulty I shall certainly go on with you to Lairg—certainly."

Matthews seemed about to speak again, but the tall Australian cut in quickly—

"Well, that's settled then. I apologise for my share in putting you about——"

"And I apologise too," put in Hillary, "but I really think you must see our position yourself."

"Quite, quite, I see it perfectly," said the Government official "Don't trouble to apologise."

The spell of silence that followed was even more strained than the last. At one station the lamps were lit and the blinds drawn down, and just after starting again Mr. Walters made the first remark.

"Our next stop is Bonar Bridge," said he. "As that is the only place where one can get refreshments, and as I have already passed my intended destination, I think we might all, perhaps, arrange to leave the carriage for a few minutes, and then any of us who want it could get a cup of tea. We would, of course, all keep within sight of one another."

He looked at Hillary as he spoke, and the Guardsman at once nodded a brief assent.

"I am quite agreeable to that," said he.

"And I—and I," added the others.

It was getting pretty dark when the doors were opened all down the train, and a crowd in blue and khaki poured across the platform to the refreshment-room. The more dignified demeanour demanded of an officer handicapped the five in this race, and for two or three minutes they were passing slowly through the back of the crowd, waiting their turn. The Grenadier was a little apart from the other three officers, and the civilian was pushing close at his shoulder. For one single instant Hillary seemed to start, and it looked as though he were going to turn his head and then refrained. He stood quite still, however, with all expression vanished from his face, and then in a minute slipped forward between two pairs of shoulders to the buffet.

The four officers each returned to the carriage carrying a cup of tea and took their seats. On the platform the crowd was breaking up and scattering back to the train, and the guard was shouting something and waving a lantern.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Lieutenant Matthews, "the Board of Agriculture chap hasn't turned up!"

"Is he going to give us the slip after all?" cried Sutherland, and there was more than a trace of excitement as he gazed through the window.

"Oh, surely not!" murmured Hillary, and yet there was a trifle of anxiety in his eye.

This time the tall Australian said nothing, but his brow was knitted, and in his eye wonder was manifest, and also a trace of excitement held on the curb. And then he spoke in rather a curious voice.

"Ah, here he is!" he said.

The civilian apologised for his delay as he rejoined the four officers.

"I'm afraid you must have thought I was going to back out," said he, "but the fact is I thought I was never going to get my cup of tea!"

"That's all right!" said Mackay, quite cheerfully again, "we're used to getting our nerves rattled!"

"Part of our business!" laughed Matthews.

The tension seemed a little relieved now. The Australians, Lieutenant Matthews, and the Government official all began to talk in a desultory fashion, and yet with some air of friendliness and less restraint. The Guardsman alone kept silent, and picking up a paper studied it apparently with great attention, for it was noticeable that he only turned over a page once in every ten minutes or so.

Outside, over the empty moor and sombre seas of pines, the darkness deepened till night had fallen quite. At one station and then another the train stopped and waited interminably. They were off again and had run for only a few minutes when once more the carriage began to jolt and slacken speed, and then in a moment ceased to move at all. On the instant the tall Australian sprang to his feet and sent the blind flying up and the window down. He looked for a second into the night, and then with a note of agitation cried—

"There's some sort of accident! Tumble out quick, you chaps!"

As he spoke his hand was on the door handle, but before he could even turn it, the voice of the civilian rang out sharp and loud—very differently from the voice they had heard before—

"Drop that handle or I fire! Hands up, all of you!" And then to Hillary he cried, "Knock now! Loud as you can!"

The tall Australian stood looking down the barrel of Mr. Walters' revolver, his muscles paralysed, his face a study in mixed emotions—Sutherland and Matthews each made a movement, and on the instant the revolver made a triangular sweep across the three of them. And

meanwhile the Guardsman was hammering on the partition. All this happened within the space of some five or ten seconds, and then the door was flung open from the outside and a square-shouldered man in plain clothes mounted into the carriage. Behind him was another in plain clothes, and behind him again three or four figures in khaki.

"Arrest these three men!" commanded the late representative of the Board of Agriculture.

The tall Australian found his voice at last.

"What the hell's all this about?" he demanded coolly enough. "What do you take us for?"

"Spies," said the detective quietly.

"Come on; game's up, out with your hands," said the plain-clothes man stolidly.

The handcuffs clinked on the wrists first of the tall man and then of the fair man and then of the R.N.R. Lieutenant. A couple of minutes later the civilian and Captain Hillary were alone in the carriage.

"I still can't take it all in," said Hillary. "When you whispered in my ear at the buffet that you were a detective and told me to knock on the partition when you gave me the tip, you dashed near flattened me out on the spot! I had honestly thought that either you were the spy, or that there was some mistake and nobody was!"

The detective smiled.

"I had only made up my own mind a few minutes before that."

"What! Didn't you know who were the spies all the time?"

"Not for certain. I don't mind telling you now, Captain Hillary, that we had information which led us to suspect very strongly that a spy—or possibly more than one spy—was probably going to try and get through on this train. Also we suspected that the uniform of a colonial officer would probably be the disguise. But that was all I had to start on, and I didn't know my man by sight—or whether there would be more than one—or even whether there would be anybody on this train at all."

"Then how did you get on their track?"

"Well, luckily there was a very small selection of Overseas officers starting from King's Cross, and only these two went north of Inverness. I'd fastened on to that tall chap from the start, simply by kind of instinct and experience, but I wasn't a bit sure that the other fellow mightn't have been the genuine article. As for the naval lieutenant, he was a complete surprise packet. He took me in fairly for a long while. In fact, if they hadn't been fools enough to travel all three in the same carriage, he'd have got through to Lairg or Cromarty, or wherever he was going, safe enough."

"He said he was going to Scapa."

The detective shook his head.

"He might have been, but I don't quite see how he'd have got into Scapa and out again without being spotted. Laing's the centre for striking off for the north-west corner of Scotland. That's more likely, or else Cromarty. However, he won't get to either place now."

"Then when did you know that the whole three were spies?"

"I'd been noticing a few little things—looks passed between them and so on; but what settled it was when I pretended I wanted to get out at Tain and all three of them agreed to it. And that was when you cleared your own character, Captain Hillary!"

Hillary laughed.

"Lucky for me I was rude to you!"

"And unlucky for them they didn't take the same line. They might have kept me wondering a bit longer. But they all three jumped a little too quickly at the chance of being left with only one man to deal with." The detective's face lit up with a smile of reminiscent admiration. "I must say, though, that tall fellow was a clever chap! When I let him in for that arrangement of all keeping together, he played the innocent manly sort of game uncommon well!"

"He took me in completely," said Hillary, "but then, of course, I'm an innocent fat-head in these matters." He paused and looked across at the other. "By Jove, now one comes to think of it, that was a fat-headed sort of thing one of those fellows did—carrying about that envelope with a German address on it! What on earth was he doing with it?"

The detective seemed to look at him rather oddly.

"It almost seemed as though it had been dropped just to provide an excuse for keeping the company from separating," he suggested drily.

The young officer laughed.

"Great idea, bringing an envelope from Germany for that purpose!"

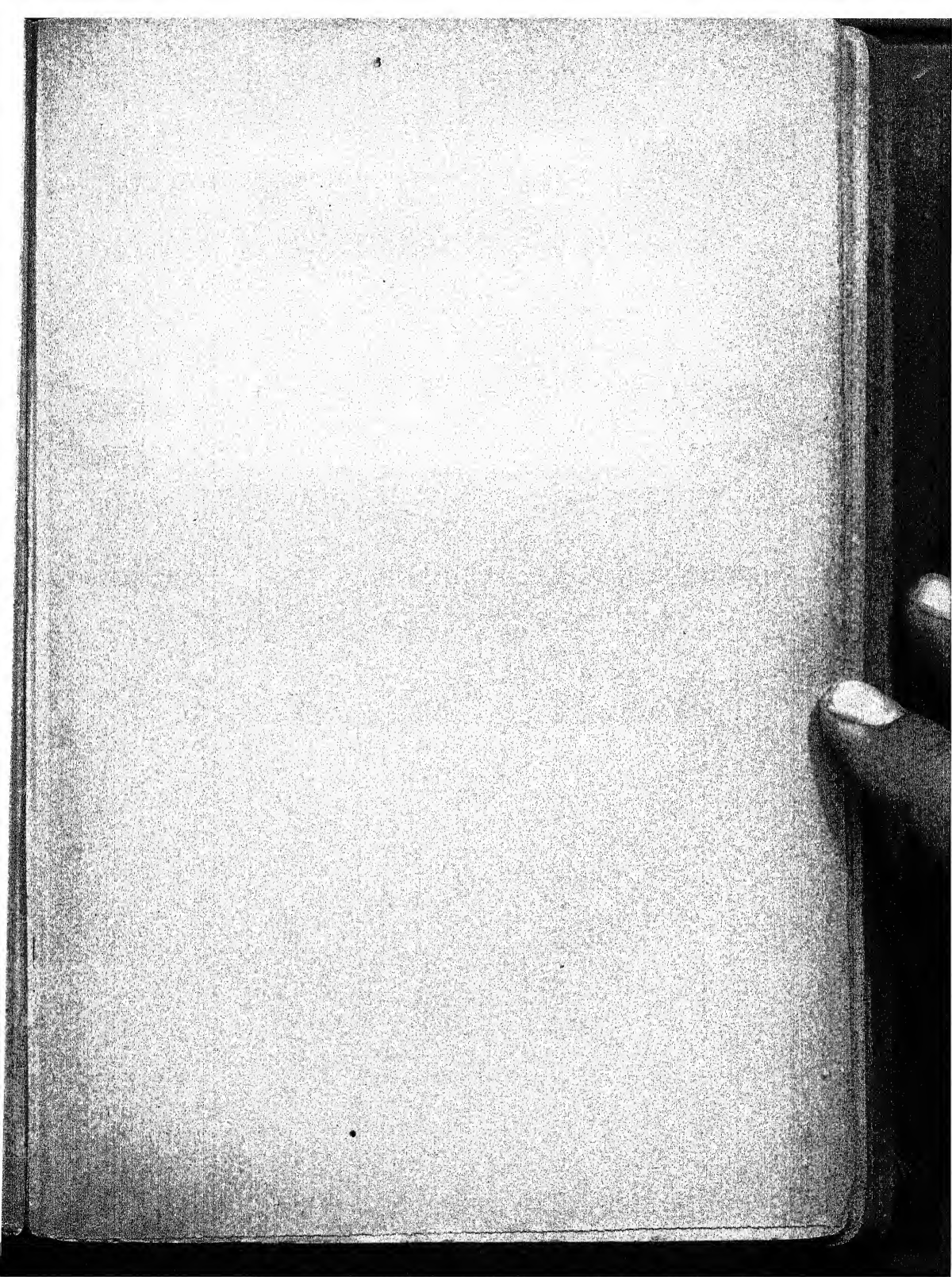
"That envelope was addressed in this carriage," said the detective gravely.

Hillary stared at him.

"What! But it was torn and dirty! Besides, how——"

"It was torn by the fat-headed chap who addressed it. He tore it because it hadn't a German stamp and postmark on it, and the whole envelope would have given the show away. As for when he did the tearing, it was when the old General got out and he jumped out too. And he dirtied it by putting the piece he meant to drop under his foot while he was standing on the platform.

"By Jove!" murmured Hillary, and then suddenly burst into a roar of laughter. "How those three must have wondered which of his pals had done such a damned silly thing!"



A. D. DIVINE

A. D. Divine, selected this story himself, for an English publisher, as his best effort in the spy-story field. It is a very good story indeed—ingenious, surprising, and full of that quality of suspense that an expert mystery-writer knows so well how to distil. And it is filled also with the mystery and magic and loneliness of the sea. Perhaps it is a little fortuitous in spots; but please note the author's neat trick when the dangerous stranger falls asleep and the tale threatens to become too easy for critical taste. Don't be alarmed—I'm not going to betray any part of the plot. But I liked that touch, and the dangerous stranger fell hard for it, just as he was intended to do. And the story ends just as and where it should, doesn't it? That is to say, it leaves something to the imagination of the reader; the situation is all the more terrible because no attempt is made to describe it. Flood on the Goodwins is really a different sort of spy story, I think; a good story cleverly imagined and skilfully worked out.

FLOOD ON THE GOODWINS

DUNDAS LOOKED OUT into the fog and blew reflectively on his finger-tips. The night was cold, raw with the steady drift of the westerly wind, and the fog poured over the dark bulk of the harbour wall as flood water pours over a breach in the dykes—as evenly, as endlessly, as ominously.

The last greyness was fading out of it now, and within twenty minutes at the outside the night would be down, and the sea as lost as the black earth in a snowdrift. Dundas blew again; not a night for fishing, he decided. Not even for war-time fishing, when food was scarce and prices high.

The complete darkness of the harbour was daunting. No lights showed even on a clear night now—save when the immediate necessities of shipping demanded it. Even to find one's way through the narrow entrance was a matter for caution and skill. Dundas knew that he could do it despite the fog—but whether he could find his way home again was another matter—and this fog might easily be a two-day affair.

It was not as if he were a regular local fisherman—though, heaven knew, even the "locals" had not gone out this night. Dundas was a "deep sea" man, third mate he had been when the war began, third mate of the *Rosvean*, five thousand tons, flush decked, running regularly like a ferry in the Rio Plata maize trade.

In the May of 1917 he had watched the *Rosvean* sink off the Casquets. The incident had made a considerable impression on him, but had in no way affected his nerves. His principal reaction had been largely one of scorn at the poorness of the shooting of the submarine which had put them down.

In the July he went down with his next ship, the *Moresby*, because the torpedo gave them rather less warning than the gun of the previous sinking.

He was picked up after two hours by a destroyer, and her commander commended him on his swimming ability.

That left him with nothing worse than a cold in the head, and at the end of July he signed on again. By this time he had won promotion. He signed on as second mate.

His new office lasted precisely seven hours, allowing for three hours in dock before the ship sailed. Off Selsey Bill, he being then on the poop supervising the readjustment of a hatch tarpaulin, the ship was struck just forward of the engine-room by a mine.

The explosion cracked five ribs, dislocated his shoulder, and three parts drowned him.

After he was brought ashore the doctors told him to take it easy for at least a month. By way of taking it easy he went down to Ramsgate, where his uncle had one of the new motor fishing boats. After five days of his aunt's cooking he began to get restless for the sea again. After seven days he was skipper of his uncle's fishing boat, and his uncle was taking a holiday.

It was a small boat, eighteen feet long, open, with the engine under a little dog-kennel cover, and no particular virtues. To-night the engine had been sulky, diffident over starting, and secretive about its disabilities.

Dundas was inclined to thank it. If the engine had started easily, he would now be out in the very thick of the fog. When he came down to the dock there had been little sign that it would close down on them suddenly an hour later.

He bent down after a moment's rest, and began tinkering with it again. He had found the trouble—dirt in the magneto—and nothing remained now but to put the pieces together again.

The lantern he was working by made a pleasant pool of reddish light in the wide blackness about him. There was little more to do now. He felt curiously alone. Save for the steady lap and splash of the water

against the sides of the boat and the stone of the wall, the night was empty of sound. Even the long low chorus of bellows and wails and grunts that normally accompanies a Channel fog was absent.

He finished piecing the engine together, replaced the cover, rolled the strap round the groove, and, giving a mighty heave, jerked it into sudden life.

After a moment he throttled down and listened contentedly to the steady purring.

Above him a voice spoke suddenly. It was an educated voice, pleasant, with a faint burr to it. "May I come aboard?" said the unknown.

"Who are you?" said Dundas, startled suddenly out of the calm emptiness that had enclosed him.

"Cutmore's my name," said the unknown. "I'm from the mine-sweeper down the wall. Taking a breather before turning in."

"Mind the weed on the ladder as you come down," said Dundas.

The unknown came slowly down, a pair of long legs coming first into the glow of the lamp, followed gradually by a long body. The unknown wore a heavy overcoat, which appeared to impede somewhat his freedom of action.

"Been having trouble with that?" he said, indicating the engine. "I heard you cursing when I passed a few minutes ago."

"Yes," said Dundas; "she's a bitch, she is, but I think I've fixed her."

"Going sweetly now?" said the unknown.

"Yes," said Dundas.

"What can you get out of her?"

"Seven knots or thereabouts," said Dundas.

"And what's her range with full tanks?"

"Eighty miles or so, I suppose," said Dundas. "I've never tried her out, really."

"Tanks full now?" said the stranger.

"Yes—er—" Dundas's tone suddenly changed. "May I ask why you are cross-examining me like this?"

"Forgive me," said the stranger, "but can you keep your mouth shut?"

"I—well, I suppose so; what is it?"

"As a matter of fact," said the stranger, "I'm a member of the Naval Intelligence service, and it is urgently necessary that I should be landed on the Belgian coast to-night. Almost anywhere along the coast will do, as long as it's clear of the German lines. I've an extraordinarily important job on hand, and it's got to be done in complete secrecy."

Dundas lifted his face away from the glow of the lamp.

"Question of getting close enough in. You know the Belgian coast, I suppose. You know how it shoals? Difficult to get a destroyer close enough in to land me with comfort. The size is against it, too, she might easily be seen by the shore posts. It's essential that I should go

by a small boat. As a matter of fact, the sweeper up the wall was to have taken me along, but she's developed engine-room defects. . . . That's why I came along to see if there was any possibility up here. They told me there was a motor-boat here. I came along, missed you the first time, and then found you by the noise of your engine."

"You said you heard me the first time," said Dundas. "Heard me swearing."

"Oh, yes," said the stranger. "I heard somebody swearing, but I didn't know it was you. As a matter of fact I went along to another boat up there, and they told me you were farther back."

"And that," said Dundas, feeling in the dark for a screw wrench, "proves you to be a liar, for there was only Terris up the wall, and he called good night to me an hour ago. Your story's a lot of bull. You're coming along with me to the sweeper now."

"I was wondering how long you'd take to see through it," said the stranger coolly. "No, don't move, I've got my foot on the monkey wrench, and I've got you covered with a fairly large calibre revolver. Now listen to me. . . ."

"You swine . . ." said Dundas provocatively.

"No you don't," said the stranger. "Keep absolutely still, because I shall shoot if you make the slightest movement, and I can hardly miss. I use soft-nosed bullets, too. Listen, I'm going to make you a fair offer. I want to charter this boat; it's absolutely necessary that I should charter it, and if you want it back you'll have to come with me. I've got to get to Bruges before ten o'clock to-morrow, and that means I've got to be on the Belgian coast by dawn. This boat can do it, and this fog makes it possible. If you'll take me there I'll give you sixty pounds, in one-pound notes. It's all I've got. If you won't do it, I'm going to shoot you now, and make a run for it myself. I can find my way out of this tin-pot basin, and I guess I can find the Belgian coast by myself. It's a fine night for yachting."

The stranger used the same tone as he had used in the early stages of his conversation, but a faint overtone of menace had crept into it. Dundas, thinking as swiftly as the other talked, decided that he meant what he said.

"You wouldn't dare," said he after a moment. "The shot would rouse the whole harbour, and the sentries on the wall would get you long before you could clear the entrance."

"In this fog?" said the stranger scornfully. "I'll take the chance."

"There's a boom across the mouth," said Dundas.

"That's an afterthought," said the stranger equably. "I don't blame you. I'd lie myself if I were in your position, but it isn't any use, you know. Are you going to accept my offer?"

"No," said Dundas. He thought rapidly for a moment. If he could

edge back slowly he could perhaps slip the tiller out of its socket and, hitting blindly in the dark, knock the other out of the boat.

The stranger seemed to be able to read his mind. "No, you don't," he said. "If you edge back another inch I'll shoot, and I don't mind telling you that I am a prize winner at revolver shooting."

"Give me a minute to think it over," said Dundas.

"I will if you turn round with your back to me. Do it slowly now. If you move too quickly I'll shoot."

Dundas moved slowly round, shuffling cautiously on the floor boards. Immediately he felt something prod him in the back.

"This bullet will rip your spine clear out," said the stranger softly. "I warn you to make up your mind quickly. If this fog clears I'm done for, you see, and I'm not taking any risks."

Dundas trod his mind as a squirrel treads its mill, but no help came. It was clear that this man was desperate. Whatever he had done, whatever he wanted to do, it was sufficiently obvious that he was prepared to risk his own life. It was equally obvious that he would not allow the life of any other to obstruct his purpose.

"Come on," said the stranger again; "sixty pounds is sixty pounds to a fisherman—and the season's bad, I know. Heroics won't help you if you're a corpse. Better take my offer and keep your mouth shut about it. Nobody will know, you can say you got lost in the fog, and couldn't get home again—engine broke down or something. Any tale. . . . Come on!"

"Can you give me any help when we get near the Belgian coast?" said Dundas suddenly. "I don't know the marks."

"Good man," said the stranger; "then you'll do it. No, I shan't be able to help you much. I don't know much about it."

"Oh, well," said Dundas slowly. "Doesn't seem as if I've any choice, and I don't suppose it'll do much harm."

"That's right," said the stranger. "That's splendid. Shall we unloosen the ropes?"

"Er—cast off—er, yes. Just a minute. Let me light the binnacle lamp. It'll be no joke working through in the fog, you know."

"I know," said the other, "but I've been waiting for a fog for a whole week now."

Dundas knelt down and, striking a match, lit the tiny lamp of the boat compass that he carried. The green card shone wanly in its glow. He could feel the muzzle of the stranger's revolver still pressed against his back.

"Sorry," said the other, "but I must safeguard myself till we're out of the harbour anyway."

Fumbling, Dundas cleared the mooring lines, and the boat drifted away from the wall. Immediately she was lost to the world.

Dundas jerked at the starting strap, and the engine came throatily to life. Foam swirled under the stern of the boat, and she surged forward through the unseen water. The fog dragged past them, faintly gold in the light of the lamp.

"We'll have that out," said Dundas after a moment; "the visibility's impossible as it is."

The stranger had squatted himself down next to the engine casing on the starboard side. He stretched out and grasped the lamp, found the wick lever, and turned it out.

They went on into the blackness with only the faint green eye of the binnacle making sign of life in it all.

After a minute or two Dundas put down the helm gently. "We ought to make the entrance now," he said.

The boat lifted to a little swell in immediate answer, and there was a momentary glance of a high black wall. From its top some one challenged, and Dundas answered, giving his name and the name of the boat.

The next instant they were outside in the live water, pitching a little to the lop that came up from the Downs.

"A-ah," said the stranger relaxing. "And that's that. Now you play me straight, young fellow, and you'll be sixty pounds the richer. How soon can we get across. It's about fifty-five miles, I should say—that's seven hours by this boat?"

Dundas shrugged in the darkness. "It's sixty-five miles as the crow flies. We'll have to reckon with the tides though."

"When's high tide?" said the stranger.

"High tide—oh, you mean the flood? Well, I'm not exactly sure, said Dundas slowly. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'll go south and a little east now, and round the heel of the Goodwins, and then stand out with the flood, and get right across. With luck we'll make it by two o'clock."

"That'll suit me," said the stranger, "but why not go straight?"

"Well, you see, this is an underpowered boat . . ." said Dundas slowly. "Don't you know anything about the sea?"

"Nothing," said the other airily. "I was in the cavalry."

"The Uhlans?" said Dundas swiftly.

"Don't ask questions, my little friend. You look after your steering." He settled himself more comfortably. "Remember," he added after a moment, "I still have my revolver in my hand. If you betray me, take me up to one of your patrol ships or anything, we will both die."

Dundas grunted and peered into the binnacle.

For a long hour there was silence. Only the steady mutter of the engine, and the occasional lift and rattle of the screw in the stern glands, broke across the silence of the night. Water noises from the

bow, and the lap-lap along the sides were somehow merged in the immense silence of the sea.

Only once, far away, they heard a bell buoy, and once the clatter of a ship's bell at anchor. At the end of the hour Dundas spoke again. "We will have cleared the Goodwins now," he said. "I'm going to stand out across the heel of them. Like to see the course we're making?"

"How?" said the other.

"Look at the compass," said Dundas.

"And bring my head in front of you with my back to you?" said the other. "No, no, my little friend. Remember only that I have my revolver and the soft-nosed bullets—and that if I die, you die too. The steering is your business—so long as you remember that."

Dundas grunted again, and shifted his helm very slightly.

For another hour they held on in silence, then Dundas heard a slight noise from for'ard. A faint, rasping noise. A moment later it came again, an unmistakable snore.

He nodded grimly to himself.

The snoring went on, grew louder, became more steady, more settled. It was plain that the stranger was fast asleep. For three hours it went on, varied occasionally by little grunts and slight pauses following a change of position.

Dundas occupied himself steadily with his helm, making tiny alterations of course from time to time, checking them carefully with a great silver watch that he held in the light of the binnacle lamp.

Quarter of an hour before midnight the stranger awoke. Dundas felt the jerk as he straightened up, hurriedly.

"You've been asleep," he said quietly, "for a long time."

The other muttered incoherently for a moment, and then said yes. Presently the implication seemed to strike him. "And you tried nothing, no, no funny business." He paused. "That was good," he said. "You are being sensible, my young friend. Sixty pounds is sixty pounds. Ach—I was tired. Three days and three nights without sleep, most of them spent in the fields of the wretched country behind Ramsgate. Lieber Gott, I was tired."

"Three days and three nights. That's since Monday, then?"

"Yes," said the other.

"Monday was the day of the big explosion?"

"What of it?" said the other.

"You. . . ."

"Partly," said the other cynically. "Since you are being sensible it does not matter if you know."

"But you are English, aren't you? Your voice. . . ."

"Come, come," said the stranger. "I was at an English school, but you knew from the start. . . ."

"I suppose so," said Dundas grudgingly.

"And how near are we?"

"Not far now," said Dundas. "We should get there a little earlier than I thought, half-past one perhaps."

"Good," said the German.

With long spells of silence and occasional brief conversations they pressed on through the night. Once or twice the fog thinned slightly, so that they could see a boat's length from them over the darkling water. Twice Dundas tried to get the German to tell him why he had to be at Bruges in so painful a hurry, but the other avoided his questions adroitly.

Every now and then he seemed to be listening.

"Strange," he said once. "Strange, we should have heard the sound of the guns by now."

"Nothing strange in fog," said Dundas; "you can hear something that's miles away sometimes, and another time miss a fog gun when you're right on top of it."

The night was getting on now. When Dundas next looked at his watch it was a quarter past one. "We should be very nearly there," he said. "Can you take a sounding?"

"What do I do?" said the other.

"Feel in the locker to your right and see if you can find a fishing line with a lead," said Dundas. "I'll slow down, and you throw it ahead of you, feel when it touches the bottom, and then measure it with your arms outstretched."

The other fumbled for a bit, experimented once, and then after a second cast said, "Nine times."

"Call it eight fathoms," said Dundas. "We're closing in on the coast."

Five minutes later he slowed for another cast.

"Six times," said the German.

"Getting there; we're inside the five fathom line."

Five minutes later they heard the sound of little seas on sand, a soft rustle that was yet loud enough to come over the noise of the engine, and the rustle and rush of their progress. Somewhere in the darkness a sleepy gull called.

"We're there," said Dundas whispering; "get ready."

The other stood up, wrapping his coat about him. Even as he did so Dundas switched off the engine, and in absolute silence they glided in. Suddenly the boat grated, dragged forward, and grated again. The German lurched, steadied himself with a hand on the thwart and said: "Lieber Gott."

"The money," said Dundas.

"But yes," said the German, fumbling in his pocket. "You are sure this is Belgium?"

"By the distance we've run," said Dundas, "and the time, it must be."

"Ha," said the other, "take it!"

Dundas met the other's hand and took a rolled bundle of notes. "Thank you," he said. "Get out over the bows; there'll be a little more than a foot of water, and give me a shove off before you go. I must get afloat again."

The other lumbered over the side, splashed for a moment, and then, bending down, heaved. The boat slid astern, Dundas pushing on the other side with the loom of an oar.

In a moment it floated free, surging back into deepish water. Dundas straightened himself, the starting strap in his hand.

"High tide's at three," he called out loudly.

He heard the other splash through the shallows, and then a scrunch as he reached the dry sand beyond. A voice came clear out of the fog to him: "What's that?"

He heard the feet run on, scrunching over the sand and then stop suddenly. The voice came out to him again. "There's water here. A strip of sand and then. . . ."

"High tide's at three," shouted Dundas again, "but the Goodwins are covered before the flood." He bent down and jerked at the starting strap and the engine woke to life. Sitting down he headed the boat round until her bows pointed a little west of north.

Swiftly he crossed the four-mile circle of water inside the Goodwin sands that he had thrashed round and round so many times during the long night. There was six miles between home and the neck of the South Goodwins, upon which a lone man stood watching the slow, relentless, upward movement of the tide.

"Thirty dead in the big explosion," said Dundas softly to himself. "Women, too. Well . . ." he fingered the roll of notes. "Dirty money's as good as clean to the Red Cross fund. And the Goodwins pays for all."

VALENTINE WILLIAMS

There is no doubt in my own mind that *The Pigeon Man* is Valentine Williams' best spy story. Although written in this author's best vein of fiction—his work has been called "a blend of intrigue and romance, unreal enough to seem true"—there is in addition a quality of truth in the story which suggests a grim chapter out of life itself. The characters seem to me to be admirably realized and one of them, the woman spy, Sylvia Averescu, remains in memory long after the tale has been put aside. A sense of finality, even of doom, is notable throughout, and the conclusion makes no compromise with public taste. Mr. Williams is not always, or even often, as good as he is in this story, and I am delighted to have found *The Pigeon Man* for this collection. Valentine Williams is a name well known to mystery fans; his most celebrated fictional character is the notorious Clubfoot, who appears in several volumes. Long a newspaper man, a foreign correspondent of note, Mr. Williams saw fighting in Portugal and the Balkans before the war of 1914 landed him in the army. He was twice wounded in World War I, and wrote his first novel while convalescing from his wounds.

THE PIGEON MAN

FLANDERS in '18, and March coming in like a lion. With a purr that, nearer the front, might have been confused with the thudding of distant drum-fire the icy rain beat against the panes. At the streaming window of a dingy bedroom of the Hôtel du Commerce a girl stood gazing listlessly into the street below. Outside, over the gleaming cobbles of the little Belgian town, the great grey lorries, splashed hood-high with Flanders mud, slithered along in an endless train, swerving from the road's greasy crown only to make way for the snorting Staff cars that, freighted with begoggled officers in field-grey, from time to time came roaring down the street. In and out of the traffic, despatch-riders on motor-cycles whirled and rattled, staying their progress with trailing, gaitered leg to inquire the location of Operations or Intelligence offices of the Corps established there. In the hotel bedroom the crockery on the washstand jingled to the din of the street.

Without turning round from her observation post, the girl flung a question across her shoulder. She was tall, and the black frock she wore emphasized her slimness. Her shining red hair, loosely coiled about her

well-shaped head, was the only blur of positive colour among the neutral shades of the room.

'Am I to wait the convenience of the Corps Intelligence office all day?' she demanded sullenly.

At a table against the wall an officer in field-grey sat reading the *Kölnische Zeitung*. He did not lift his eyes from his newspaper at the girl's question.

'Such were Colonel von Trompeter's orders, *meine Gnädige*,' he retorted.

She stamped her foot and faced the speaker. 'This room stifles me, do you hear?' she exclaimed tensely. 'I don't mind the rain: I'm going out!'

'No!' said the officer.

'Do I understand that I'm a prisoner?'

The officer shrugged his shoulders as, stretching forth his arms, he folded back the paper. 'You're of the Service, *Fräulein Sylvia*,' he rejoined placidly. 'You've got to obey orders like the rest of us!'

'Agreed,' she cried. 'But they can trust me, can't they?'

The officer shrugged his shoulders again. 'Doubtless the Colonel had his reasons for not wishing civilians to roam about Corps Headquarters. . . .'

'Bah!' she broke in contemptuously. 'Do you think I'm blind? Do you really imagine, Captain Pracht, that I don't know'—she waved a slim hand towards the window and the sounding street beyond—'what all this movement means? Every railhead from the North Sea to the Vosges is pouring forth men and guns; your troops released by the Russian Revolution are gathering to deal the Allies the final —'

Pracht sprang to his feet. '*Um Gottes Willen*, mind what you're saying! You speak of things that are known to but a handful of us —'

'Quite so, my friend. But will you please remember that I am of that handful? My sources in Brussels are excellent —' She broke off and contemplated her companion's face. 'Why has Colonel von Trompeter sent for me?'

'There I can answer you quite frankly,' said the Captain. 'I don't know.'

'And if you did, you wouldn't tell me?'

The officer bowed. 'It would be hard to refuse so charming a lady anything. . . .'

She shook herself impatiently. 'Words, merely words!' she cried.

She let her eyes rest meltingly on his face. They were strange eyes, madder-brown under dark lashes. 'Have you ever been in love, Captain Pracht?'

The officer's face set doggedly, so that two small vertical lines appeared on either side of his thin lips under the clipped brown mous-

tache. 'Never on duty, *gnädiges Fräulein*—that is'—he paused, then added—'unless commanded.'

'Why, then,' she put in merrily, 'I might have spared myself the trouble of locking my door last night.'

Captain Pracht flushed darkly, and a little pulse began to beat at his temple.

She looked at him fixedly and laughed. 'You have a charming *métier*, Herr Hauptmann!'

An ugly look crept into his face. 'The same as yours, *meine Gnädige!*'

A patch of colour crept into her pale cheeks. 'Not quite!' Her voice vibrated a little. 'Men know how to protect themselves. They go into these things with their eyes open. But almost every woman, even in the Secret Service, is blinded by love . . . once. . . .' She sighed and added, 'The first time. . . .'

'The gracious lady speaks from personal experience, no doubt,' the officer hazarded. His manner was unpleasant.

With calm disdain she looked him up and down. 'Yes,' she answered simply.

'I have always said,' the Captain announced ponderously, 'that women were too emotional for Secret Service work. Especially foreigners.'

'Rumanians, for instance?' suggested the girl sweetly.

'I was not speaking personally,' retorted the officer huffily. 'If we must have women spies, then why not Germans? Our German women have an ingrained sense of discipline, a respect for orders . . .'

The girl's gurgling laugh pealed through the room. 'But their taste in nighties is dreadful,' she broke in. 'You must remember, my dear Captain Pracht, that our battle-field is the boudoir —'

At that moment the door was flung back. An orderly, in a streaming cape, stood there. 'Colonel von Trompeter's compliments,' he bawled out of a wooden face, saluting with a stamp that shook the floor, 'and will the Herr Hauptmann bring *Fräulein Averescu* to the office immediately.'

'THE trouble about this job of ours, young Horst,' said Colonel von Trompeter, 'is to recognize the truth when you find it!'

A heavy man, the Herr Oberst, but handsome still with his fearless eyes of the brightest blue, straight nose, and trim white moustache. The blue-and-silver Hussar cap which, in defiance of all clothing regulations, he insisted on wearing with his Staff uniform, was the only evidence that he had started his army career in the light cavalry, for advancing years had endowed him with the body of a heavy dragoon. His big form, muscular yet under its swelling curves, was moulded in his well-fitting service dress of grey, frogged with the brandenbourgs of the Hussars, and the broad pink stripe of the Great General Staff, together

with the glossy brown field-boot into which it disappeared, set off admirably his length of leg.

A fine blade, the Herr Oberst, with a naturally intuitive mind sharpened by the intensive training of War School and Great General Staff, a gift of lightning decision and a notable aptitude for languages. But, more than this, he was a man of rugged character, of unflinching moral courage, and as such ranged head and shoulders above the swarm of silver-laced sycophants at Headquarters who assiduously lick-spittled to His Excellency Lieutenant-General Baron Haase von dem Hasenberg, the Corps Commander. For His Excellency, a choleric old party with the brains of a louse and the self-control of a gorilla, was His Majesty's friend who with supple spine had genuflected his way up the rough road of promotion under the approving eye of the All-Highest War Lord.

His Excellency detested his Chief of Intelligence. He might have forgiven Colonel von Trompeter his outstanding ability, for brains are an asset on the staff of a Corps Commander when awkward incidents have to be covered up; and Baron Haase had not been a lucky leader. But His Excellency was enraged by the Colonel's habit of invariably speaking his mind. It infuriated him that Colonel von Trompeter should have made his career in spite of his brutal candour. When only a Major, acting as assistant umpire at Kaiser manoeuvres, had he not curtly replied to the Emperor himself, enthusiastically seeking praise for a cavalry charge led in the All-Highest Person against a nest of machine-guns: 'All dead to the last horse, Your Majesty!' and been promptly exiled to an East Prussian frontier garrison for his pains?

Yet, although the victim of the All-Highest displeasure had lived the incident down, he had learned nothing by experience. To the Corps Commander's resentful fury, he flatly refused to curry favour with his immediate chief by lending himself to the great conspiracy of eyewash by means of which, in war as in peace, the War Lord was justified of his appointments to the high commands.

And so a state of open warfare existed between His Excellency—and that signified the bulk of the Headquarters Staff—and his Chief of Intelligence. Only the Intelligence Staff, who worshipped Trompeter to a man, less for his brilliant ability than for his sturdy championship of his subordinates even in the face of the epileptic ravings of His Excellency, stood by their chief. For the rest, every imaginable form of chicane and sabotage was employed in the attempt to drive Colonel von Trompeter into seeking a transfer. In almost every branch of Corps Headquarters, save only the Intelligence, it became as important to defeat Colonel von Trompeter and his assistants as to beat the English who held the line in this part of Flanders. And His Excellency proclaimed at least thrice a day to all who would hear him that Trompeter was 'ein taktloser Kerl.'

When, therefore, on this wet March morning, 'the old man,' as his staff called Trompeter, delivered himself of the apothegm set forth above, Lieutenant Horst, his youngest officer, who was examining a sheaf of aeroplane photographs at his desk in a corner of the office, glanced up with troubled eyes. It was rare, indeed, that 'the old man' allowed the daily dose of pinpricks to get under his skin. But to-day the Chief was restless. Ever since breakfast he had been pacing like a caged lion up and down the wet track left by the boots of visitors on the strip of matting between the door and his desk.

'Operations are making trouble about the shelling of the 176th divisional area last night,' the Colonel continued.

'With permission, Herr Oberst,' Horst put in diffidently, 'these fresh troops carry on as though they were still in Russia. Their march discipline is deplorable. They were probably spotted by aircraft —'

The Herr Oberst shook his grizzled poll. 'Won't wash, my boy. They went in after dark. That explanation we put up to Operations when the 58th Division had their dumps shelled last week. Operations won't swallow it again. Humph —'

He grunted and turned to stare out into the rain. A battalion was passing up the street, rank on rank of soaked and weary men. Their feet hammered out a melancholy tattoo on the cobbles. There was no brave blare of music to help them on their way. The band marched in front with instruments wrapped up against the wet. 'Fed — up,' 'Fed — up,' the crunching feet seemed to say.

The Colonel's voice suddenly cut across the rhythmic tramping. 'What time is Ehrhardt arriving with that prisoner from the 91st Division?' he asked.

'He was ordered for eleven, Herr Oberst!'

'It's after that now —'

'The roads are terribly congested, Herr Oberst!'

The Colonel made no reply. His fingers drummed on the window-pane. Then he said: 'Our English cousins are concentrating on the Corps area, young Horst. They've got a pigeon man out. That much was clear when that basket of pigeons was picked up in Fleury Wood last week.'

'A pigeon man, Herr Oberst?'

'I was forgetting; you're new to the game. So you don't know what a pigeon man is, young Horst?'

'No, Herr Oberst!'

'Then let me tell you something: if you ever meet a pigeon man, you can safely take your hat off to him, for you're meeting a hero. It's a job that means almost certain death. A pigeon man is a Secret Service officer who's landed by an aeroplane at some quiet spot in the enemy lines with a supply of carrier-pigeons. His job is to collect the reports

which spies have already left for him at agreed hiding-places. He fastens these messages to the legs of his birds and releases them to fly back to their loft. . . .

'Does the aeroplane wait, Herr Oberst?'

The Colonel laughed shortly, 'I wo! The pigeon man has to make his way home the best he can. They usually head for the Dutch frontier. . . .'

'He's in plain clothes, then?'

'Of course. That's why I say the job means almost certain death. Even we Huns, as they call us, are justified in shooting an officer caught in plain clothes behind our lines.'

The young man pursed up his lips in a silent whistle. 'Brave fellows! Do we send out pigeon men too, Herr Oberst?'

His Chief shook his head. 'They wouldn't stand an earthly. The pigeon man can operate successfully only among a friendly civilian population— Well?'

An orderly had bounced into the office, and, stiff as a ramrod, now fronted the Colonel. 'Hauptmann Ehrhardt is here to report to the Herr Oberst.'

The clear blue eyes snapped into alertness. 'Has he brought a prisoner with him, Reinhold?'

'Jawohl, Herr Oberst.'

'Send him in! Prisoner and escort remain outside.' He turned to Horst as the orderly withdrew. 'Herr Leutnant, a certain lady is waiting at the Hôtel du Commerce in charge of Captain Pracht, of the Brussels command. I may ask you to send for her presently. You will not say anything to her about this prisoner, and you will be responsible to me that no one approaches him in the mean time. And see that I'm not disturbed.'

Then with bowed head the Colonel resumed his pacing up and down.

'As the Herr Oberst will see for himself,' said Ehrhardt, rocking slightly as he stood stiffly at attention before his chief—he was a secondary-school teacher in civil life and the military still overawed him—'the prisoner is practically a half-wit. If you speak to him, he only grins idiotically and dribbles. He looks half-starved, and as for his body—well, with respect, he's fairly crawling. God knows how long he's been wandering about the Bois des Corbeaux, where the fatigue party ran across him in the early hours of this morning. According to the Herr Oberst's orders, I had advised all units that any civilian caught in our lines was to be brought straightway to me at the Divisional Intelligence office. When this man was sent in, I rang the Herr Oberst up at once. I haven't overlooked the possibility that the fellow may be acting a

part; but I'm bound to say that he seems to me to be what he looks like—a half-witted Flemish peasant. Speaking ethnologically —'

A brusque gesture cut short the imminent deadly treatise on the psychology of the Flemings. The Colonel pointed to a chair beside the desk and pushed across a box of cigars.

'Ehrhardt,' said he, 'information of the most exact description is being sent back regularly. Our troop movements are known. The 176th Division had two hundred casualties getting into their billeting area last night. These are no haphazard notes of regimental numbers jotted down at railway stations, or of movements of isolated units strung together by ignorant peasants. They are accurate reports prepared with intelligence by some one with a thorough grasp of the military situation. The English have a star man operating on this front. Who he is or what he looks like we don't know; but what we do know is that correspondence of a very secret nature which fell into the hands of one of our agents at The Hague speaks with enthusiasm of the accuracy of the reports sent by an unnamed agent concerning our present troop movements in Belgium. You are aware of my belief that an English pigeon man has been at work here'—he bent his white-tufted brows at his companion, who was gazing intently at him through gold-rimmed spectacles. 'Supposing our friend outside is the man I'm looking for . . . ?'

Very positively Captain Ehrhardt shook his head. 'Of course,' he said in his pedantic fashion, 'I must bow to the Herr Oberst's experience in these matters. But for me the hypothesis is out of the question. This fellow may be a spy; but in that case he's an agent of the lowest order, a brutish Belgian peasant—not a man of the calibre you mention, an educated individual, possibly a regular officer.'

'Certainly a regular officer,' the Colonel's calm voice broke in.

'Ausgeschlossen, Herr Oberst! The thing's impossible, as you'll realize the moment you see him!'

'Wait, my friend! The English have an extraordinary fellow, with whom we of the Great General Staff are well acquainted, at least by repute from pre-war days. We never managed to ascertain his name or get his photograph; but we know him for a man who is a marvellous linguist, with a most amazing knowledge of the Continent and Continental peoples. Dialect is one of his specialties. What is more to the point, he is a magnificent actor, and his skill in disguises is legendary. Again and again we were within an ace of catching him, but he always contrived to slip through our fingers. We used to call him N, the unknown quantity. Do you see what I'm driving at?'

'Gewiss, gewiss, Herr Oberst!' Ehrhardt wagged his head dubiously. 'But this lout is no English officer.'

'Well,' said the Colonel, let's look at him, anyway.' He pressed a but-

ton on the desk, and presently, between two stolid figures in field-grey, a woe-begone and miserable-looking tramp shambled in.

His clothes were a mass of rags. On his head a torn and shapeless cloth cap was stuck askew, and from beneath its tattered peak a pair of hot, dark eyes stared stupidly out of a face that was clotted with grime and darkened, as to the lower part, with a stiff growth of beard. A straggling moustache trembled above a pendulous under-lip that gleamed redly through bubbles that frothed at the mouth and dripped down the chin. His skin glinted yellowly through great rents in jacket and trousers, and his bare feet were thrust into clumsy, broken boots, one of which was swathed round with a piece of filthy rag. As he stood framed between the fixed bayonets of the escort, long shudders shook him continually.

Without looking up, the Colonel scribbled something on a writing-pad, tore off the slip and gave it to Horst. 'Let the escort remain outside,' he ordered. Horst and the guards clumped out. Then only did Trompeter, screwing his monocle in his eye, favour the prisoner with a long and challenging stare. The man did not budge. He continued to gaze into space, with his head rocking slightly to and fro and the saliva running down his chin.

The Colonel spoke in an aside to Ehrhardt. 'You say you found nothing on him when you searched him?'

'Only a clasp-knife, some horse-chestnuts, and a piece of string, Herr Oberst.'

'No papers?'

'No, Herr Oberst.'

The Colonel addressed the prisoner in French. 'Who are you and where do you come from?' he demanded.

Very slowly the man turned his vacuous gaze towards the speaker. He smiled feebly and dribbled, but did not speak.

'It struck me that he might be dumb,' Ehrhardt whispered across the desk, 'although he seems to hear all right.'

'Wait!' Trompeter bade him. He spoke to the prisoner again. 'Any civilian found wandering in the military zone without proper papers is liable to be shot,' he said sternly. 'Do you realize that?'

The tramp grinned feebly and made a gurgling noise like an infant. The Colonel repeated his warning in Flemish.

'Grr . . . goo . . . grr!' gibbered the prisoner.

Trompeter went round the desk and looked the man in the eye. 'See his hands, Herr Oberst,' said Ehrhardt in an undertone. The tramp's hands were coarse and horny, with blackened and broken nails. 'Are those the hands of an officer?'

The Colonel grunted, but made no other comment.

There was a smart rap at the door. Rerihold, the orderly, appeared

with a tray. On it were set out a pot of coffee, a jug of milk, sugar, a plate of ham, and a hunk of greyish war bread. The Colonel signed to the man to put the tray down on a side table. Then he turned to the prisoner. 'Eat!' he bade him.

The idiot grinned broadly and broke into a cackling laugh. Then, while the two officers watched him from a distance, he fell upon the victuals. It was horrible to see him wolf the food. He tore the ham with his hands and thrust great fragments into his mouth; he literally buried his face in the bread, wrenching off great lumps with his teeth; he emptied the milk-pot at a draught, spilling a good deal of the milk down his jacket in the process. He made animal noises as he ate and drank, stuffing himself until he gasped for breath.

'Could an officer eat like that?' Ehrhardt whispered in his chief's ear. But again the Colonel proffered no remark.

When the last of the food had disappeared he said to his subordinate: 'Take the prisoner outside now, and when I ring three times send him in—alone. Alone, do you understand?'

'Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!'

Left alone, Colonel von Trompeter strode across to the window and stood for an instant looking out. In the street a gang of British prisoners of war, their threadbare khaki sodden with the rain, scraped away at the mud with broom and spade. A voice at the door brought the Colonel about. Horst was there.

'Herr Oberst, the lady has arrived!'

'She's not seen the prisoner, I trust?'

'No, Herr Oberst. I put her to wait in the orderlies' room.'

Trompeter nodded approval. 'Good. I'll see her at once . . . alone.'

As Horst went away, he moved to the desk and turned the chair which Ehrhardt had vacated so that it faced the door. He himself remained standing, his hands resting on the desk at his back. With his long fingers he made sure that the bell-push in its wooden bulb was within his reach.

It was commonly said of Colonel von Trompeter that he had a card-index mind. He forgot no name, no face, no date, that came into his day's work, and he had an uncanny facility at need of opening, as it were, a drawer in his brain and drawing forth a file of data.

As he helped Sylvia Averescu out of her wrap and invited her to be seated, he was mentally glancing over her record. Nineteen hundred and twelve it had been when Steuben had bought her away from the Russians at Bucharest and installed her at Brussels, that clearing-house of international espionage. For a woman, the Colonel condescendingly reflected, she had proved her worth. That affair of the signalling-book of H.M.S. *Queen* had been her doing; and it was she who had laid the

information which had led to the arrest of the English spy, Barton, at Wilhelmshaven.

'Madame,' was Trompeter's opening when he had given her a cigarette, 'I have ventured to bring you out from Brussels in this terrible weather because I need your help.'

Sylvia Averescu looked at him coldly. Her wait in a freezing cubby-hole full of damp and strongly flavored orderlies had not improved her temper. She had entered the room resolved to give this Colonel von Trompeter a piece of her mind. Yet, somehow, his personality cowed her. Against her will she was favourably impressed by his direct gaze, good looks, and charming manners. She saw at once that he was a regular officer of the old school, a man of breeding, not a commercial traveller stuffed into uniform, like Pracht. She was flattered by the way he handed her to a chair and assisted her out of her furs as though she were a Duchess. And the Latin in her, which had always squirmed at the 'Frau' and 'Fräulein' of her German associates, was grateful for 'Madame' as a form of address.

Still, the recollection of that icy vigil yet grated on her, and she replied rather tartly, 'I don't know in what way I can be of any assistance to you, Herr Oberst.'

The Colonel's blue eyes rested for an instant on her handsome, rather discontented face. Then, brushing the ash from the end of his cigarette, he said: 'When you were in Brussels before the War, you knew the British Secret Service people pretty well, I believe?'

She shrugged her shoulders. 'It was what I was paid for.'

'You were acquainted with some of their principal agents, I take it: the star turns, I mean—men like Francis Okewood or Philip Brewster, or—he paused—even our friend N, the mysterious Unknown Quantity?'

She laughed on a hard note. 'If you'll tell me who N was—or is,' she returned, 'I'll tell you if I knew him. I've met the other two you mentioned.' She leaned back in her chair and blew out luxuriously a cloud of smoke. '"The Unknown Quantity," eh? What a dance he led you, Colonel! I've often wondered which of the boys he was.'

The Colonel's hand groped behind him until he found the bell. Thrice his thumb pushed the button. His eyes were on the woman as she reclined gracefully in her chair staring musingly at the ceiling. His watchful gaze did not quit her face even when the door was suddenly thrust open and a tatterdemalion figure hobbled into the room.

Trompeter, his face a mask of steel, saw how, at the sound of the door closing, the woman at his side looked up—saw, too, the little furrow of perplexity that suddenly appeared between her narrow, arching eyebrows. But the swift, suspicious glance she shot at her companion found him apparently intent on studying the end of his cigarette, yet even

as her gaze switched back to the outcast, cowering in forlorn abandonment in the centre of the floor, the Colonel's bright blue eyes were quick to note the expression of horror-struck amazement which for one fleeting instant flickered across her regular features.

But the next moment she was bored and listless as before. So swift was her reaction that it was as though her face had never lost its wonted air of rather sulky indifference. She darted an amused glance at the impassive visage gazing down upon her and laughed.

'You have some queer visitors, Herr Oberst,' she said. 'Tell me'—she indicated the tramp with a comic movement of the head—'is he one of us?'

'No,' replied Trompeter, with quiet emphasis.

'Then who is he?'

'I was hoping you would be able to tell me that.'

She stared at him for a moment, then suddenly broke into a peal of merry laughter.

'Oh, my dear Colonel,' she exclaimed, 'you do their ingenuity too much honour.'

'And yet,' observed Trompeter quietly, 'he's one of their star men.' His eyes were on the prisoner as he spoke. But the tramp, leering idiotically, stared into space and dribbled feebly.

Sylvia Averescu laughed incredulously. 'Then they've changed their methods. All the British Secret Service aces I've known were serving officers, or ex-officers. You're not going to claim that this miserable creature is an English gentleman, Colonel. Why, his hands alone give you the lie!'

'Specially roughened for the job!'

'What job?'

But the Colonel left the question unanswered. 'The English are devilish thorough,' he added. 'I'll grant them that!'

The woman left her chair and went boldly up to the idiot. With a pointing finger she indicated a V of yellow skin that appeared below his uncollared neck between the lapels of his jacket.

'Look,' she vociferated in disgust, 'the man's filthy. He hasn't had a bath for years! She turned about to face Trompeter, who had followed her. 'If this man is what you say, he would have a white skin, a properly tended body, under his rags. But this creature is disgusting!'

Trompeter stepped swiftly up to the prisoner and with brutal hands ripped the ragged jacket apart. The man wore no shirt; his coat was buttoned across his naked body. The Colonel recoiled a pace and clapped his handkerchief to his nose. '*Bfui Deibell!*' he muttered.

Something had rattled smartly on the floor. Trompeter stooped quickly with groping fingers; then, drawing himself erect, stared fixedly at the prisoner. The outside pocket of the idiot's jacket had been almost

ripped away in the vigour of the Colonel's action and hung lamentably down. Trompeter's hand darted into the torn pocket and explored the lining. His fingers dredged up some tiny invisible thing which he transferred to the palm of his other hand.

With an air of triumph he swung round to the woman. 'Well,' he remarked roughly, 'he's for it, anyway. If he were a friend of yours, I should tell you to kiss him good-bye.'

At that she faltered ever so slightly. 'What do you mean?' Her voice was rather hoarse.

'What I mean,' Trompeter gave her back brutally, 'is that he's the pigeon man we've been looking for. He'll go before the court in the morning, and by noon he'll be snugly under the sod!'

So saying, he unfolded his clenched hand and thrust it close under her face. Two little shining yellow grains reposed in the open palm. 'Maize,' he announced grimly. 'Food for the birds. Pigeon men always carry it.'

With that, he shut his hand and joined it to its fellow behind his back, while he dropped his square chin on his breast and sternly surveyed her.

'And do you mean to say,' she questioned unsteadily, 'that the military court would send him to his death on no other evidence than that?'

'Certainly. There was an identical case last month. Two English flying officers. They shot them in the riding school at Charleroi. Game lads they were, too!'

'But this poor devil may have picked up some maize somewhere and kept it for food. He looks half-starved, anyway.'

Trompeter shrugged his shoulders. 'That's his lookout. We're not taking any chances on pigeon men. They're too dangerous, my dear. Not that I want the poor devil shot. I'd rather have him identified.'

The woman raised her head and gazed curiously at the Colonel. 'Why?' she asked, almost in a whisper.

Trompeter drew her to the window, out of earshot of the prisoner. Outside, the whole town seemed to reverberate to the passage of heavy guns, monsters, snouting under their tarpaulins, that thundered by in the wake of their tractors.

'Because,' he said in an undertone, 'I can use him to mislead the enemy. Our dear English cousins shall get their pigeon service all right, but after this the birds will carry my reports instead of our friend's. For this I must have the fellow's name.' He paused and bent his bushy eyebrows at her. 'You know this man?'

'Wait,' she bade him, rather breathless. 'Let us get this clear. If this man were identified, you would spare his life?'

The Colonel nodded curtly. His eyes never left her face.

'What guarantee have I that you will keep your word?'

'I shall hand over to you the only evidence there is against him.'

'You mean the maize?'

'Yes.'

She cast a timorous glance across the room to where the prisoner was standing, his head lolling on his shoulder. He had not changed his position. His eyes were half closed and his tongue hung out under the ragged moustache. The reek of him was pungent in the room.

Silently she held out her hand to Trompeter. Without hesitation he dropped the two grains of maize into the slender palm. She ran to the stove and dropped them in. Impassively the Colonel watched her from the window. The maps on the walls trembled in the din of gun-wheels in the street.

Slowly the woman returned to the Colonel's side. He noticed how pale her face appeared against the flame of her hair. She looked at him intently, then said, in a sort of breathless whisper, 'You're right, I know him.'

A steely light glittered in the quick blue eyes. 'Ah! Who is it?'

'Dunlop. Captain Dunlop.'

Trompeter leaned forward swiftly. 'Not "The Unknown Quantity"?'

She made a little movement of the shoulders. 'I can't tell you. He never attempted to disguise himself with me.'

'Did you meet him in Brussels?'

She nodded. 'He used to come over from London almost every week-end. . . .'

The Colonel grunted assent. 'Yes, that was the way they did it before the War.' He flashed her a scrutinizing glance. 'Did you know him well? You're sure you're not making a mistake?'

She shook her head, and there was something wistful in the gesture. 'He was my lover. . . .'

Trompeter smiled broadly. 'Ah,' he murmured, 'Steuben always managed that sort of thing so cleverly. . . .'

'Steuben had nothing to do with it,' came back her hot whisper. 'No one knew him for a secret agent—at least, not until I found him out. He told me he was an English engineer who came to Brussels on business; I was jealous of him, and one day I discovered he was visiting another woman, a Belgian. Then—then I followed things up and found out the rest. He was frank enough when I confronted him—the English are, you know. He told me he had only been carrying out his orders. And I—she faltered—'I was part of those orders too. . . .'

She clenched her hands tensely, and turned to stare forlornly out at the rain.

'You were fond of him, Madame?'

'My feelings have nothing to do with the business between you and me, Colonel,' she told him glacially over her shoulder.

He bowed. 'I beg your pardon. And you have told me all you know. What is his full name?'

'James, I think. I called him Jimmy.'

'How did he sign his reports? Can you tell me that?'

She nodded. "'J. Dunlop,'" she answered.

'How do you know this?'

'Because I made it my business to find out . . . afterwards!' she answered passionately, and was silent.

'And he is a regular officer?'

'Of the Royal Engineers.' She turned to the Colonel. 'And now, if you don't mind, I should like to go back to my hotel. I—I don't feel very well. I expect I must have caught a chill. This awful weather . . .'

The Colonel rang. 'I'll send for Captain Pracht —'

Like a fury she rounded on him. 'For the love of God!' she burst forth, 'am I never to be left alone again? Can't I go back to the hotel by myself?'

Trompeter bowed. 'Certainly, if you promise to go straight there. It's in your own interest I say it. The P.M. is very strict about civilians just now.'

'I'll go straight back,' she retorted impatiently. 'And you'll keep to our bargain, Colonel?'

The officer inclined his head.

'What—what will you do with him?' she asked, rather unsteadily.

'Oh, prisoners of war camp, I suppose,' was the brisk answer.

She said no more, but moved slowly towards the door. There she paused and let her eyes rest for an instant on the scarecrow shape that mowed and gibbered between them. The Colonel saw her put forth one little hand towards the pigeon man and stand thus as though she hoped that he might turn and greet her. But the tramp with his melancholy imbecile stare paid no heed. She seemed to droop as she turned and passed out.

Then Trompeter went up to the prisoner and clapped him encouragingly on the shoulder. 'It's a wonderful disguise, Dunlop,' he said pleasantly and in flawless English, 'and I don't mind telling you that you nearly took me in. But the game's up, my friend! You're spotted. Let's have a friendly talk. I don't expect you to give anything away, but I'm anxious for news of Colonel Ross, my esteemed opposite number on the other side of No Man's Land. I heard he'd been down with this damnable grippe. . . .'

'Goo . . . 'I mumbled the tramp, and the bubbles frothed at his mouth. The telephone on the desk rang. The Colonel left the prisoner to answer it. A well-bred voice said: 'His Excellency desires to speak with Colonel von Trompeter.' The next instant a high-pitched, furious voice came ringing over the wire.

'Is that Trompeter? So, Herr Oberst, a new division can't come into the Corps area without being shelled to ribbons! What the devil are your people doing? What's that you say? You're investigating. Investigating be damned! I want action—action, do you understand? The whole Corps knows that there's a spy in the area sending information back, and when I ask you what you propose to do about it, you tell me you're investigating! *Verdammt nochmal!* What I expect you to do is to catch the lousy fellow and shoot him, and, by God, if you don't, I'll have the collar off your back, and don't you forget it! *Himmelkreuzsakrament!* I'll show you who's in command here, you and your investigation! You'll report to me in person at six o'clock this afternoon, and I shall expect to hear then that you've laid hands on this spy. If you fail me this time, Herr Oberst, I give you fair warning that I'll get somebody I can rely upon to carry out my wishes. And you are to understand that the General is extremely dissatisfied with you. Is that clear?'

'*Zu Befehl, Excellenz!*' replied the Colonel stiffly, and hung up the receiver. He lit a cigarette and sat at the desk for a full minute, contemplating through a swathe of blue smoke the wretched-looking out-cast before him.

'Sorry, Dunlop,' he said at last. 'I'd have saved you if I could, but charity begins at home. My General demands a victim, and my head is the price. I'm a poor man, my friend, with no private means and a family to support. I've got powerful enemies, and if I lose this job my career's over. As God is my judge, Dunlop, I can't afford to keep my pledged word.' He paused and pressed his handkerchief to his lips. 'If there's anything I can do about letting your people know . . .'

He broke off expectantly, but the pigeon man made no sign. With his head cocked in the air his whole attention appeared to be directed to a fly buzzing round the wire of the electric light.

'You'll at least give me the honour,' Trompeter went on rather tremulously, 'of shaking hands with a brave man?'

But the pigeon man did not even look at him. His grimy right hand stole furtively under his tattered jacket and he writhed beneath his verminous rags. His gaze remained immutably distant, as though he were peering down some long vista. Slowly the grizzled head at the desk drooped and there was a moment's pregnant hush in the room.

Then the Colonel stood up, a stalwart figure, and moved resolutely to a press in the wall. He opened the door and disclosed, neatly hung on pegs, his steel helmet, revolver, Thermos flask, map-case, and saddle-bags. He unstrapped one of the saddle-bags, and, dipping in his hand, brought away in his fingers a few shining orange grains. Then he rang and told the orderly to send in Captain Ehrhardt. The officer recoiled at the grim severity of his chief's expression.

'Also, Herr Hauptmann,' was the Colonel's greeting, 'you searched the prisoner, did you?'

'Jawohl, Herr Oberst!' said Ehrhardt, in a quaking voice.

'And found nothing, I think you told me?'

'Nothing—that is, except the articles I enumerated, Herr Oberst, namely —'

The stern voice interrupted him. 'Would it surprise you to learn that I discovered maize in the prisoner's pocket when I searched him? See!' The Colonel's hand opened and spilled a few grains of maize on the blotter. 'It appears to me, Herr Hauptmann, that you have grossly neglected your duty. You've got to wake yourself up, or one of these mornings you'll find yourself back in the trenches with your regiment. Now pay attention to me! The prisoner goes before the tribunal tomorrow. You will have him washed and disinfected and issued with clean clothes immediately, and hand him over to the Provost Marshal. Horst will warn the P.M. The prisoner can have anything he likes in the way of food or drink or smokes. Your evidence will be required at the trial, so you'll have to stay the night. See Horst about a bed. March the prisoner out!'

The door shut and the escort's ringing tramp died away. Grimly the Colonel shook his balled fist at the telephone.

'Break me, would you, you old sheepshead!' he muttered through his teeth. 'But my pigeon man will spike your guns, my boy! Verdammt, though, the price is high!'

Then, drawing himself up to his full height, he brought his heels together with a jingle of spurs and gravely saluted the door through which the pigeon man had disappeared between the fixed bayonets of his guards.

A week later, in an unobtrusive office off Whitehall, high above the panorama of London threaded by the silver Thames, a large, quiet man sat at his desk and frowned down at a typewritten sheet he held in his hand.

'Well,' he said, addressing an officer in khaki who stood in an expectant attitude before him, 'they've nabbed Tony, Carruthers!'

'Oh, sir!' ejaculated Carruthers in dismay. 'You were right, then?'

'Fraid so. I knew they'd pinched him when Corps forwarded those Dunlop messages that kept reachin' 'em by pigeon. Prendergast, of Rotterdam, says here he has word from a trustworthy source in Belgium that at Roulers on the 6th the Boches shot a half-witted tramp on a charge of espionage. The trial, of course, was held in secret, but the rumour in the town is that the tramp was a British officer. That'd be Tony, all right. God bless my soul, what an actor the fellow was! I'd never have lent him for this job, only G.H.Q. were so insistent. Well,

he had a good run for his money, anyway. Our friends on the other side used to call him N, "The Unknown Quantity." They never managed to identify him, you see. My hat! Old Tony must be smilin' to think that he managed to take his *incognito* down to the grave with him.'

'But did he?'

'Obviously, otherwise the old Boches would have signed his real name to those pigeon messages of theirs which have so much amused Ross and his young men at Corps Headquarters.'

'But why "Dunlop," sir?'

The large man smiled enigmatically. 'Ah,' he remarked, 'you weren't in the Service before the War, Carruthers, or you'd have known that "Dunlop" was one of our accommodation names in the office. Most of us were Captain Dunlop at one time or another. I've been Captain Dunlop myself. We run up against some rum coves in this business, and it ain't a bad plan to have a sort of general alias. It prevents identification, and all manner of awkwardness, when the double-crossin' begins.' He broke off to chuckle audibly. 'Let's see, it's old Trompeter on that front, ain't it? I wonder where he got hold of the office *alias*, the foxy old devil! He's probably put up another Iron Cross over this! He'd be kickin' himself if he knew the truth. That's the catch about this job of ours, my boy—to recognize the truth when you find it!'

So saying, the large man unlocked his desk and, taking out a book, turned to a list of names. With the red pencil he scored out, slowly and methodically, a name that stood there.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

It is related, I am afraid on somewhat dubious authority, that Mr. Sherlock Holmes is currently head of the British system of espionage, and it has been rumored that Dr. John H. Watson, his colleague, is serving in the medical corps of the British army. But, really, you know, they are getting along now, both of them! Holmes is certainly well past 80—as a matter of fact, he is 90. He was born, as we all should remember, on January 6, 1854. His services in the first World War are well known, but if you have forgotten the details, they are in that story called His Last Bow. I might have included it in this book, but in many ways The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans is a better tale. It opens in the approved manner, in a dense yellow fog, which is all to the good, although the alternative setting of a “high autumnal wind” would have been equally acceptable. It is notable also in that it marks one of the rare appearances on the scene of Mycroft Holmes, that stupendous genius. This is one of the stories in our collection that everybody will have read before, but that won't make any difference to anybody who has fallen under the spell of Watson's prose—so prosaic yet so unaccountably magical. Ave, Sherlock! We who shall some day die salute you deathless and undying!

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS

IN THE THIRD WEEK of November, in the year 1895, a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. From the Monday to the Thursday I doubt whether it was ever possible from our windows in Baker Street to see the loom of the opposite houses. The first day Holmes had spent in cross-indexing his huge book of references. The second and third had been patiently occupied upon a subject which he had recently made his hobby—the music of the Middle Ages. But when, for the fourth time, after pushing back our chairs from breakfast we saw the greasy, heavy brown swirl still drifting past us and condensing in oily drops upon the window-panes, my comrade's impatient and active nature could endure this drab existence no longer. He paced restlessly about our sitting-room in a fever of suppressed energy, biting his nails, tapping the furniture, and chafing against inaction.

"Nothing of interest in the paper, Watson?" he said.

I was aware that by anything of interest, Holmes meant anything of criminal interest. There was the news of a revolution, of a possible war, and of an impending change of government; but these did not come within the horizon of my companion. I could see nothing recorded in the shape of crime which was not commonplace and futile. Holmes groaned and resumed his restless meanderings.

"The London criminal is certainly a dull fellow," said he in the querulous voice of the sportsman whose game has failed him. "Look out of this window, Watson. See how the figures loom up, are dimly seen, and then blend once more into the cloud-bank. The thief or the murderer could roam London on such a day as the tiger does the jungle, unseen until he pounces, and then evident only to his victim."

"There have," said I, "been numerous petty thefts."

Holmes snorted his contempt.

"This great and sombre stage is set for something more worthy than that," said he. "It is fortunate for this community that I am not a criminal."

"It is, indeed!" said I heartily.

"Suppose that I were Brooks or Woodhouse, or any of the fifty men who have good reason for taking my life, how long could I survive against my own pursuit? A summons, a bogus appointment, and all would be over. It is well they don't have days of fog in the Latin countries—the countries of assassination. By Jove! here comes something at last to break our dead monotony."

It was the maid with a telegram. Holmes tore it open and burst out laughing.

"Well, well! What next?" said he. "Brother Mycroft is coming round."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Why not? It is as if you met a tram-car coming down a country lane. Mycroft has his rails and he runs on them. His Pall Mall lodgings, the Diogenes Club, Whitehall—that is his cycle. Once, and only once, he has been here. What upheaval can possibly have derailed him?"

"Does he not explain?"

Holmes handed me his brother's telegram.

Must see you over Cadogan West. Coming at once.

MYCROFT

"Cadogan West? I have heard the name."

"It recalls nothing to my mind. But that Mycroft should break out in this erratic fashion! A planet might as well leave its orbit. By the way, do you know what Mycroft is?"

I had some vague recollection of an explanation at the time of the Adventure of the Greek Interpreter.

"You told me that he had some small office under the British government."

Holmes chuckled.

"I did not know you quite so well in those days. One has to be discreet when one talks of high matters of state. You are right in thinking

that he is under the British government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he is the British government."

"My dear Holmes!"

"I thought I might surprise you. Mycroft draws four hundred and fifty pounds a year, remains a subordinate, has no ambitions of any kind, will receive neither honour nor title, but remains the most indispensable man in the country."

"But how?"

"Well, his position is unique. He has made it for himself. There has never been anything like it before, nor will be again. He has the tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living. The same great powers which I have turned to the detection of crime he has used for this particular business. The conclusions of every department are passed to him, and he is the central exchange, the clearing-house, which makes out the balance. All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience. We will suppose that a minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from various departments upon each, but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say offhand how each factor would affect the other. They began by using him as a short-cut, a convenience; now he has made himself an essential. In that great brain of his everything is pigeon-holed and can be handed out in an instant. Again and again his word has decided the national policy. He lives in it. He thinks of nothing else save when, as an intellectual exercise, he unbends if I call upon him and ask him to advise me on one of my little problems. But Jupiter is descending to-day. What on earth can it mean? Who is Cadogan West, and what is he to Mycroft?"

"I have it," I cried, and plunged among the litter of papers upon the sofa. "Yes, yes, here he is, sure enough! Cadogan West was the young man who was found dead on the Underground on Tuesday morning."

Holmes sat up at attention, his pipe halfway to his lips.

"This must be serious, Watson. A death which has caused my brother to alter his habits can be no ordinary one. What in the world can he have to do with it? The case was featureless as I remember it. The young man had apparently fallen out of the train and killed himself. He had not been robbed, and there was no particular reason to suspect violence. Is that not so?"

"There has been an inquest," said I, "and a good many fresh facts have come out. Looked at more closely, I should certainly say that it was a curious case."

"Judging by its effect upon my brother, I should think it must be a most extraordinary one." He snuggled down in his armchair. "Now, Watson, let us have the facts."

"The man's name was Arthur Cadogan West. He was twenty-seven years of age, unmarried, and a clerk at Woolwich Arsenal."

"Government employ. Behold the link with brother Mycroft!"

"He left Woolwich suddenly on Monday night. Was last seen by his fiancée, Miss Violet Westbury, whom he left abruptly in the fog about 7:30 that evening. There was no quarrel between them and she can give no motive for his action. The next thing heard of him was when his dead body was discovered by a plate-layer named Mason, just outside Aldgate Station on the Underground system in London."

"When?"

"The body was found at six on the Tuesday morning. It was lying wide of the metals upon the left hand of the track as one goes eastward, at a point close to the station, where the line emerges from the tunnel in which it runs. The head was badly crushed—an injury which might well have been caused by a fall from the train. The body could only have come on the line in that way. Had it been carried down from any neighboring street, it must have passed the station barriers, where a collector is always standing. This point seems absolutely certain."

"Very good. The case is definite enough. The man, dead or alive, either fell or was precipitated from a train. So much is clear to me. Continue."

"The trains which traverse the lines of rail beside which the body was found are those which run from west to east, some being purely Metropolitan, and some from Willesden and outlying junctions. It can be stated for certain that this young man, when he met his death, was travelling in this direction at some late hour of the night, but at what point he entered the train it is impossible to state."

"His ticket, of course, would show that."

"There was no ticket in his pockets."

"No ticket! Dear me, Watson, this is really very singular. According to my experience it is not possible to reach the platform of a Metropolitan train without exhibiting one's ticket. Presumably, then, the young man had one. Was it taken from him in order to conceal the station from which he came? It is possible. Or did he drop it in the carriage? That also is possible. But the point is of curious interest. I understand that there was no sign of robbery?"

"Apparently not. There is a list here of his possessions. His purse contained two pounds fifteen. He had also a check-book on the Woolwich branch of the Capital and Counties Bank. Through this his identity was established. There were also two dress-circle tickets for the Woolwich Theatre, dated for that very evening. Also a small packet of technical papers."

Holmes gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"There we have it at last, Watson! British government—Woolwich.

Arsenal—technical papers—Brother Mycroft, the chain is complete. But here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to speak for himself.”

A moment later the tall and portly form of Mycroft Holmes was ushered into the room. Heavily built and massive, there was a suggestion of uncouth physical inertia in the figure, but above this unwieldy frame there was perched a head so masterful in its brow, so alert in its steel-grey, deep-set eyes, so firm in its lips, and so subtle in its play of expression, that after the first glance one forgot the gross body and remembered only the dominant mind.

At his heels came our old friend Lestrade, of Scotland Yard—thin and austere. The gravity of both their faces foretold some weighty quest. The detective shook hands without a word. Mycroft Holmes struggled out of his overcoat and subsided into an armchair.

“A most annoying business, Sherlock,” said he. “I extremely dislike altering my habits, but the powers that be would take no denial. In the present state of Siam it is most awkward that I should be away from the office. But it is a real crisis. I have never seen the Prime Minister so upset. As to the Admiralty—it is buzzing like an overturned bee-hive. Have you read up the case?”

“We have just done so. What were the technical papers?”

“Ah, there’s the point! Fortunately, it has not come out. The press would be furious if it did. The papers which this wretched youth had in his pocket were the plans of the Bruce-Partington submarine.”

Mycroft Holmes spoke with a solemnity which showed his sense of the importance of the subject. His brother and I sat expectant.

“Surely you have heard of it? I thought everyone had heard of it.”

“Only as a name.”

“Its importance can hardly be exaggerated. It has been the most jealously guarded of all government secrets. You may take it from me that naval warfare becomes impossible within the radius of a Bruce-Partington’s operation. Two years ago a very large sum was smuggled through the Estimates and was expended in acquiring a monopoly of the invention. Every effort has been made to keep the secret. The plans, which are exceedingly intricate, comprising some thirty separate patents, each essential to the working of the whole, are kept in an elaborate safe in a confidential office adjoining the arsenal, with burglar-proof doors and windows. Under no conceivable circumstances were the plans to be taken from the office. If the chief constructor of the Navy desired to consult them, even he was forced to go to the Woolwich office for the purpose. And yet here we find them in the pockets of a dead junior clerk in the heart of London. From an official point of view it’s simply awful.”

“But you have recovered them?”

“No, Sherlock, no! That’s the pinch. We have not. Ten papers were

taken from Woolwich. There were seven in the pockets of Cadogan West. The three most essential are gone—stolen, vanished. You must drop everything, Sherlock. Never mind your usual petty puzzles of the police-court. It's a vital international problem that you have to solve. Why did Cadogan West take the papers, where are the missing ones, how did he die, how came his body where it was found, how can the evil be set right? Find an answer to all these questions, and you will have done good service for your country."

"Why do you not solve it yourself, Mycroft? You can see as far as I."

"Possibly, Sherlock. But it is a question of getting details. Give me your details, and from an armchair I will return you an excellent expert opinion. But to run here and run there, to cross-question railway guards, and lie on my face with a lens to my eye—it is not my *métier*. No, you are the one man who can clear the matter up. If you have a fancy to see your name in the next honours list——"

My friend smiled and shook his head.

"I play the game for the game's own sake," said he. "But the problem certainly presents some points of interest, and I shall be very pleased to look into it. Some more facts, please."

"I have jotted down the more essential ones upon this sheet of paper, together with a few addresses which you will find of service. The actual official guardian of the papers is the famous government expert, Sir James Walter, whose decorations and sub-titles fill two lines of a book of reference. He has grown grey in the service, is a gentleman, a favoured guest in the most exalted houses, and, above all, a man whose patriotism is beyond suspicion. He is one of two who have a key of the safe. I may add that the papers were undoubtedly in the office during working hours on Monday, and that Sir James left for London about three o'clock taking his key with him. He was at the house of Admiral Sinclair at Barclay Square during the whole of the evening when this incident occurred."

"Has the fact been verified?"

"Yes; his brother, Colonel Valentine Walter, has testified to his departure from Woolwich, and Admiral Sinclair to his arrival in London; so Sir James is no longer a direct factor in the problem."

"Who was the other man with a key?"

"The senior clerk and draughtsman, Mr. Sidney Johnson. He is a man of forty, married, with five children. He is a silent, morose man, but he has, on the whole, an excellent record in the public service. He is unpopular with his colleagues, but a hard worker. According to his own account, corroborated only by the word of his wife, he was at home the whole of Monday evening after office hours, and his key has never left the watchchain upon which it hangs."

"Tell us about Cadogan West."

"He has been ten years in the service and has done good work. He has the reputation of being hot-headed and impetuous, but a straight, honest man. We have nothing against him. He was next Sidney Johnson in the office. His duties brought him into daily, personal contact with the plans. No one else had the handling of them."

"Who locked the plans up that night?"

"Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk."

"Well, it is surely perfectly clear who took them away. They are actually found upon the person of this junior clerk, Cadogan West. That seems final, does it not?"

"It does, Sherlock, and yet it leaves so much unexplained. In the first place, why did he take them?"

"I presume they were of value?"

"He could have got several thousands for them very easily."

"Can you suggest any possible motive for taking the papers to London except to sell them?"

"No, I cannot."

"Then we must take that as our working hypothesis. Young West took the papers. Now this could only be done by having a false key——"

"Several false keys. He had to open the building and the room."

"He had, then, several false keys. He took the papers to London to sell the secret, intending, no doubt, to have the plans themselves back in the same next morning before they were missed. While in London on this treasonable mission he met his end."

"How?"

"We will suppose that he was travelling back to Woolwich when he was killed and thrown out of the compartment."

"Aldgate, where the body was found, is considerably past the station for London Bridge, which would be his route to Woolwich."

"Many circumstances could be imagined under which he would pass London Bridge. There was someone in the carriage, for example, with whom he was having an absorbing interview. This interview led to a violent scene in which he lost his life. Possibly he tried to leave the carriage, fell out on the line, and so met his end. The other closed the door. There was a thick fog, and nothing could be seen."

"No better explanation can be given with our present knowledge; and yet consider, Sherlock, how much you leave untouched. We will suppose, for argument's sake, that young Cadogan West had determined to convey these papers to London. He would naturally have made an appointment with the foreign agent and kept his evening clear. Instead of that he took two tickets for the theatre, escorted his fiancée halfway there, and then suddenly disappeared."

"A blind," said Lestrade, who had sat listening with some impatience to the conversation.

"A very singular one. That is objection No. 1. Objection No. 2: We will suppose that he reaches London and sees the foreign agent. He must bring back the papers before morning or the loss will be discovered. He took away ten. Only seven were in his pocket. What had become of the other three? He certainly would not leave them of his own free will. Then, again, where is the price of his treason? One would have expected to find a large sum of money in his pocket."

"It seems to me perfectly clear," said Lestrade. "I have no doubt at all as to what occurred. He took the papers to sell them. He saw the agent. They could not agree as to price. He started home again, but the agent went with him. In the train the agent murdered him, took the more essential papers, and threw his body from the carriage. That would account for everything, would it not?"

"Why had he no ticket?"

"The ticket would have shown which station was nearest the agent's house. Therefore he took it from the murdered man's pocket."

"Good, Lestrade, very good," said Holmes. "Your theory holds together. But if this is true, then the case is at an end. On the one hand, the traitor is dead. On the other, the plans of the Bruce-Partington submarine are presumably already on the Continent. What is there for us to do?"

"To act, Sherlock—to act!" cried Mycroft, springing to his feet. "All my instincts are against this explanation. Use your powers! Go to the scene of the crime! See the people concerned! Leave no stone unturned! In all your career you have never had so great a chance of serving your country."

"Well, well!" said Holmes, shrugging his shoulders. "Come, Watson! And you, Lestrade, could you favour us with your company for an hour or two? We will begin our investigation by a visit to Aldgate Station. Good-bye, Mycroft. I shall let you have a report before evening, but I warn you in advance that you have little to expect."

An hour later Holmes, Lestrade and I stood upon the Underground railroad at the point where it emerges from the tunnel immediately before Aldgate Station. A courteous red-faced old gentleman represented the railway company.

"This is where the young man's body lay," said he, indicating a spot about three feet from the metals. "It could not have fallen from above, for these, as you see, are all blank walls. Therefore, it could only have come from a train, and that train, so far as we can trace it, must have passed about midnight on Monday."

"Have the carriages been examined for any sign of violence?"

"There are no such signs, and no ticket has been found."

"No record of a door being found open?"

"None."

"We have had some fresh evidence this morning," said Lestrade. "A passenger who passed Aldgate in an ordinary Metropolitan train about 11:40 on Monday night declares that he heard a heavy thud, as of a body striking the line, just before the train reached the station. There was dense fog, however, and nothing could be seen. He made no report of it at the time. Why, whatever is the matter with Mr. Holmes?"

My friend was standing with an expression of strained intensity upon his face, staring at the railway metals where they curved out of the tunnel. Aldgate is a junction, and there was a network of points. On these his eager, questioning eyes were fixed, and I saw on his keen, alert face that tightening of the lips, that quiver of the nostrils, and concentration of the heavy, tufted brows which I knew so well.

"Points," he muttered; "the points."

"What of it? What do you mean?"

"I suppose there are no great number of points on a system such as this?"

"No; there are very few."

"And a curve, too. Points, and a curve. By Jove! if it were only so."

"What is it, Mr. Holmes? Have you a clue?"

"An idea—an indication, no more. But the case certainly grows in interest. Unique, perfectly unique, and yet why not? I do not see any indications of bleeding on the line."

"There were hardly any."

"But I understand that there was a considerable wound."

"The bone was crushed, but there was no great external injury."

"And yet one would have expected some bleeding. Would it be possible for me to inspect the train which contained the passenger who heard the thud of a fall in the fog?"

"I fear not, Mr. Holmes. The train has been broken up before now, and the carriages redistributed."

"I can assure you, Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade, "that every carriage has been carefully examined. I saw to it myself."

It was one of my friend's most obvious weaknesses that he was impatient with less alert intelligences than his own.

"Very likely," said he, turning away. "As it happens, it was not the carriages which I desired to examine. Watson, we have done all we can here. We need not trouble you any further, Mr. Lestrade. I think our investigations must now carry us to Woolwich."

At London Bridge, Holmes wrote a telegram to his brother, which he handed to me before dispatching it. It ran thus:

See some light in the darkness, but it may possibly flicker out.

Meanwhile, please send by messenger, to await return at Baker Street, a complete list of all foreign spies or international agents known to be in England, with full address.

SHERLOCK

"That should be helpful, Watson," he remarked as we took our seats in the Woolwich train. "We certainly owe brother Mycroft a debt for having introduced us to what promises to be a really very remarkable case."

His eager face still wore that expression of intense and high-strung energy, which showed me that some novel and suggestive circumstance had opened up a stimulating line of thought. See the foxhound with hanging ears and drooping tail as it lolls about the kennels, and compare it with the same hound as, with gleaming eyes and straining muscles, it runs upon a breast-high scent—such was the change in Holmes since the morning. He was a different man from the limp and lounging figure in the mouse-coloured dressing-gown who had prowled so restlessly only a few hours before round the fog-girt room.

"There is material here. There is scope," said he. "I am dull indeed not to have understood its possibilities."

"Even now they are dark to me."

"The end is dark to me also, but I have hold of one idea which may lead us far. The man met his death elsewhere, and his body was on the roof of a carriage."

"On the roof!"

"Remarkable, is it not? But consider the facts. Is it a coincidence that it is found at the very point where the train pitches and sways as it comes round on the points? Is not that the place where an object upon the roof might be expected to fall off? The points would affect no object inside the train. Either the body fell from the roof, or a very curious coincidence has occurred. But now consider the question of the blood. Of course, there was no bleeding on the line if the body had bled elsewhere. Each fact is suggestive in itself. Together they have a cumulative force."

"And the ticket, too!" I cried.

"Exactly. We could not explain the absence of a ticket. This would explain it. Everything fits together."

"But suppose it were so, we are still as far as ever from unravelling the mystery of his death. Indeed, it becomes not simpler but stranger."

"Perhaps," said Holmes thoughtfully, "perhaps." He relapsed into a silent reverie, which lasted until the slow train drew up at last in Woolwich Station. There he called a cab and drew Mycroft's paper from his pocket.

"We have quite a little room for afternoon calls to make," said he. "I think that Sir James Walter claims our first attention."

The house of the famous official was a fine villa with green lawns stretching down to the Thames. As we reached it the fog was lifting, and a thin, watery sunshine was breaking through. A butler answered our ring.

"Sir James, sir?" said he with a solemn face. "Sir James died this morning."

"Good heavens!" cried Holmes in amazement. "How did he die?"

"Perhaps you would care to step in, sir, and see his brother, Colonel Valentine?"

"Yes, we had best do so."

We were ushered into a dim-lit drawing-room, where an instant later we were joined by a very tall, handsome, light-bearded man of fifty, the younger brother of the dead scientist. His wild eyes, stained cheeks, and unkempt hair all spoke of the sudden blow which had fallen upon the household. He was hardly articulate as he spoke of it.

"It was this horrible scandal," said he. "My brother, Sir James, was a man of very sensitive honour, and he could not survive such an affair. It broke his heart. He was always so proud of the efficiency of his department, and this was a crushing blow."

"We had hoped that he might have given us some indications which would have helped us to clear the matter up."

"I assure you that it was all a mystery to him as it is to you and to all of us. He had already put all his knowledge at the disposal of the police. Naturally he had no doubt that Cadogan West was guilty. But all the rest was inconceivable."

"You cannot throw any new light upon the affair?"

"I know nothing myself save what I have read or heard. I have no desire to be discourteous, but you can understand, Mr. Holmes that we are much disturbed at present, and I must ask you to hasten this interview to an end."

"This is indeed an unexpected development," said my friend when we had regained the cab. "I wonder if the death was natural, or whether the poor old fellow killed himself! If the latter, may it be taken as some sign of self-reproach for duty neglected? We must leave that question to the future. Now we shall turn to the Cadogan Wests."

A small but well-kept house in the outskirts of the town sheltered the bereaved mother. The old lady was too dazed with grief to be of any use to us, but at her side was a white-faced young lady, who introduced herself as Miss Violet Westbury, the fiancée of the dead man, and the last to see him upon that fatal night.

"I cannot explain it, Mr. Holmes," she said. "I have not shut an eye since the tragedy, thinking, thinking, thinking, night and day, what

the true meaning of it can be. Anger was the most single-minded, chivalrous, patriotic man upon earth. He would have cut his right hand off before he would sell a State secret confided to his keeping. It is absurd, impossible, preposterous to anyone who knew him."

"But the facts, Miss Westbury?"

"Yes, yes; I admit I cannot explain them."

"Was he in any want of money?"

"No; his needs were very simple and his salary ample. He had saved a few hundreds, and we were to marry at the New Year."

"No signs of any mental excitement? Come, Miss Westbury, be absolutely frank with us."

The quick eye of my companion had noted some change in her manner. She coloured and hesitated.

"Yes," she said at last, "I had a feeling that there was something on his mind."

"For long?"

"Only for the last week or so. He was thoughtful and worried. Once I pressed him about it. He admitted that there was something, and that it was concerned with his official life. 'It is too serious for me to speak about, even to you,' said he. I could get nothing more."

Holmes looked grave.

"Go on, Miss Westbury. Even if it seems to tell against him, go on. We cannot say what it may lead to."

"Indeed, I have nothing more to tell. Once or twice it seemed to me that he was on the point of telling me something. He spoke one evening of the importance of the secret, and I have some recollection that he said that no doubt foreign spies would pay a great deal to have it."

My friend's face grew graver still.

"Anything else?"

"He said that we were slack about such matters—that it would be easy for a traitor to get the plans."

"Was it only recently that he made such remarks?"

"Yes, quite recently."

"Now tell us of that last evening."

"We were to go to the theatre. The fog was so thick that a cab was useless. We walked, and our way took us close to the office. Suddenly he darted away into the fog."

"Without a word?"

"He gave an exclamation; that was all. I waited but he never returned. Then I walked home. Next morning, after the office opened, they came to inquire. About twelve o'clock we heard the terrible news. Oh, Mr. Holmes, if you could only, only save his honour! It was so much to him."

Holmes shook his head sadly.

"Come, Watson," said he, "our ways lie elsewhere. Our next station must be the office from which the papers were taken.

"It was black enough before against this young man, but our inquiries make it blacker," he remarked as the cab lumbered off. "His coming marriage gives a motive for the crime. He naturally wanted money. The idea was in his head, since he spoke about it. He nearly made the girl an accomplice in the treason by telling her his plans. It is all very bad."

"But surely, Holmes, character goes for something? Then, again, why should he leave the girl in the street and dart away to commit a felony?"

"Exactly! There are certainly objections. But it is a formidable case which they have to meet."

Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk, met us at the office and received us with that respect which my companion's card always commanded. He was a thin, gruff, bespectacled man of middle age, his cheeks haggard, and his hands twitching from the nervous strain to which he had been subjected.

"It is bad, Mr. Holmes, very bad! Have you heard of the death of the chief?"

"We have just come from his house."

"The place is disorganized. The chief dead, Cadogan West dead, our papers stolen. And yet, when we closed our door on Monday evening, we were as efficient an office as any in the government service. Good God, it's dreadful to think of! That West, of all men, should have done such a thing!"

"You are sure of his guilt, then?"

"I can see no other way out of it. And yet I would have trusted him as I trust myself."

"At what hour was the office closed on Monday?"

"At five."

"Did you close it?"

"I am always the last man out."

"Where were the plans?"

"In that safe. I put them there myself."

"Is there no watchman to the building?"

"There is, but he has other departments to look after as well. He is an old soldier and a most trustworthy man. He saw nothing that evening. Of course the fog was very thick."

"Suppose that Cadogan West wished to make his way into the building after hours; he would need three keys, would he not, before he could reach the papers?"

"Yes, he would. The key of the outer door, the key of the office, and the key of the safe."

"Only Sir James Walter and you had those keys?"

"I had no keys of the doors—only of the safe."

"Was Sir James a man who was orderly in his habits?"

"Yes, I think he was. I know that so far as those three keys are concerned he kept them on the same ring. I have often seen them there."

"And that ring went with him to London?"

"He said so."

"And your key never left your possession?"

"Never."

"Then West, if he is the culprit, must have had a duplicate. And yet none was found upon his body. One other point: if a clerk in this office desired to sell the plans, would it not be simpler to copy the plans for himself than to take the originals, as was actually done?"

"It would take considerable technical knowledge to copy the plans in an effective way."

"But I suppose either Sir James, or you, or West had that technical knowledge?"

"No doubt we had, but I beg you won't try to drag me into the matter, Mr. Holmes. What is the use of our speculating in this way when the original plans were actually found on West?"

"Well, it is certainly singular that he should run the risk of taking originals if he could safely have taken copies, which would have equally served his turn."

"Singular, no doubt—and yet he did so."

"Every inquiry in this case reveals something inexplicable. Now there are three papers still missing. They are, as I understand, the vital ones."

"Yes, that is so."

"Do you mean to say that anyone holding these three papers, and without the seven others, could construct a Bruce-Partington submarine?"

"I reported to that effect to the Admiralty. But to-day I have been over the drawings again, and I am not so sure of it. The double valves with the automatic self-adjusting slots are drawn in one of the papers which have been returned. Until the foreigners had invented that for themselves they could not make the boat. Of course they might soon get over the difficulty."

"But the three missing drawings are the most important?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I think, with your permission, I will now take a stroll round the premises. I do not recall any other question which I desired to ask."

He examined the lock of the safe, the door of the room, and finally the iron shutters of the window. It was only when we were on the lawn outside that his interest was strongly excited. There was a laurel

bush outside the window, and several of the branches bore signs of having been twisted or snapped. He examined them carefully with his lens, and then some dim and vague marks upon the earth beneath. Finally he asked the chief clerk to close the iron shutters, and he pointed out to me that they hardly met in the centre, and that it would be possible for anyone outside to see what was going on within the room.

"The indications are ruined by the three days' delay. They may mean something or nothing. Well, Watson, I do not think that Woolwich can help us further. It is a small crop which we have gathered. Let us see if we can do better in London."

Yet we added one more sheaf to our harvest before we left Woolwich Station. The clerk in the ticket office was able to say with confidence that he saw Cadogan West—whom he knew well by sight—upon the Monday night, and that he went to London by the 8:15 to London Bridge. He was alone and took a single third-class ticket. The clerk was struck at the time by his excited and nervous manner. So shaky was he that he could hardly pick up his change, and the clerk had helped him with it. A reference to the timetable showed that the 8:15 was the first train which it was possible for West to take after he had left the lady about 7:30.

"Let us reconstruct, Watson," said Holmes after half an hour of silence. "I am not aware that in all our joint researches we have ever had a case which was more difficult to get at. Every fresh advance which we make only reveals a fresh ridge beyond. And yet we have surely made some appreciable progress."

"The effect of our inquiries at Woolwich has in the main been against young Cadogan West; but the indications at the window would lend themselves to a more favourable hypothesis. Let us suppose, for example, that he had been approached by some foreign agent. It might have been done under such pledges as would have prevented him from speaking of it, and yet would have affected his thoughts in the direction indicated by his remarks to his fiancée. Very good. We will now suppose that as he went to the theatre with the young lady he suddenly, in the fog, caught a glimpse of this same agent going in the direction of the office. He was an impetuous man, quick in his decisions. Everything gave way to his duty. He followed the man, reached the window, saw the abstraction of the documents, and pursued the thief. In this way we get over the objection that no one would take originals when he could make copies. This outsider had to take originals. So far it holds together."

"What is the next step?"

"Then we come into difficulties. One would imagine that under such circumstances the first act of young Cadogan West would be to

seize the villain and raise the alarm. Why did he not do so? Could it have been an official superior who took the papers? That would explain West's conduct. Or could the chief have given West the slip in the fog, and West started at once to London to head him off from his own rooms, presuming that he knew where the rooms were? The call must have been very pressing, since he left his girl standing in the fog, and made no effort to communicate with her. Our scent runs cold here, and there is a vast gap between either hypothesis and the laying of West's body, with seven papers in his pocket, on the roof of a Metropolitan train. My instinct now is to work from the other end. If Mycroft has given us the list of addresses we may be able to pick our man and follow two tracks instead of one."

Surely enough, a note awaited us at Baker Street. A government messenger had brought it post-haste. Holmes glanced at it and threw it over to me.

There are numerous small fry, but few who would handle so big an affair. The only men worth considering are Adolph Meyer, of 13 Great George Street, Westminster; Louis La Rothière, of Campden Mansions, Notting Hill; and Hugo Oberstein, 13 Caulfield Gardens, Kensington. The latter was known to be in town on Monday and is now reported as having left. Glad to hear you have seen some light. The Cabinet awaits your final report with the utmost anxiety. Urgent representations have arrived from the very highest quarter. The whole force of the State is at your back if you should need it.

MYCROFT

"I'm afraid," said Holmes, smiling, "that all the queen's horses and all the queen's men cannot avail in this matter." He had spread out his big map of London and leaned eagerly over it. "Well, well," said he presently with an exclamation of satisfaction, "things are turning a little in our direction at last. Why, Watson, I do honestly believe that we are going to pull it off, after all." He slapped me on the shoulder with a sudden burst of hilarity. "I am going out now. It is only a reconnaissance. I will do nothing serious without my trusted comrade and biographer at my elbow. Do you stay here, and the odds are that you will see me again in an hour or two. If time hangs heavy get foolscap and a pen, and begin your narrative of how we saved the State."

I felt some reflection of his elation in my own mind, for I knew well that he would not depart so far from his usual austerity of demeanour unless there was good cause for exultation. All the long November evening I waited, filled with impatience for his return. At last, shortly after nine o'clock, there arrived a messenger with a note:

Am dining at Goldini's Restaurant, Gloucester Road, Kensington. Please come at once and join me there. Bring with you a jemmy, a dark lantern, a chisel, and a revolver.

S. H.

It was a nice equipment for a respectable citizen to carry through the dim, fog-draped streets. I stowed them all discreetly away in my overcoat and drove straight to the address given. There sat my friend at a little round table near the door of the garish Italian restaurant.

"Have you had something to eat? Then join me in a coffee and curaçao. Try one of the proprietor's cigars. They are less poisonous than one would expect. Have you the tools?"

"They are here, in my overcoat."

"Excellent. Let me give you a short sketch of what I have done, with some indication of what we are about to do. Now it must be evident to you, Watson, that this young man's body was placed on the roof of the train. That was clear from the instant that I determined the fact that it was from the roof, and not from a carriage, that he had fallen."

"Could it not have been dropped from a bridge?"

"I should say it was impossible. If you examine the roofs you will find that they are slightly rounded, and there is no railing round them. Therefore, we can say for certain that young Cadogan West was placed on it."

"How could he be placed there?"

"That was the question which we had to answer. There is only one possible way. You are aware that the Underground runs clear of tunnels at some points in the West End. I had a vague memory that as I have travelled by it I have occasionally seen windows just above my head. Now, suppose that a train halted under such a window, would there be any difficulty in laying a body upon the roof?"

"It seems most improbable."

"We must fall back upon the old axiom that when all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Here all other contingencies have failed. When I found that the leading international agent, who had just left London, lived in a row of houses which abutted upon the Underground. I was so pleased that you were a little astonished at my sudden frivolity."

"Oh, that was it, was it?"

"Yes, that was it. Mr. Hugo Oberstein, of 13 Caulfield Gardens, had become my objective. I began my operations at Gloucester Road Station, where a very helpful official walked with me along the track and allowed me to satisfy myself not only that the back-stair windows of Caulfield Gardens open on the line but the even more essential fact that, owing to the intersection of one of the larger railways, the Under-

ground trains are frequently held motionless for some minutes at that very spot."

"Splendid, Holmes! You have got it!"

"So far—so far, Watson. We advance, but the goal is afar. Well, having seen the back of Caulfield Gardens, I visited the front and satisfied myself that the bird was indeed flown. It is a considerable house, unfurnished, so far as I could judge, in the upper rooms. Oberstein lived there with a single valet, who was probably a confederate entirely in his confidence. We must bear in mind that Oberstein has gone to the Continent to dispose of his booty, but not with any idea of flight; for he had no reason to fear a warrant, and the idea of an amateur domiciliary visit would certainly never occur to him. Yet that is precisely what we are about to make."

"Could we not get a warrant and legalize it?"

"Hardly on the evidence."

"What can we hope to do?"

"We cannot tell what correspondence may be there."

"I don't like it, Holmes."

"My dear fellow, you shall keep watch in the street. I'll do the criminal part. It's not a time to stick at trifles. Think of Mycroft's note, of the Admiralty, the Cabinet, the exalted person who waits for news. We are bound to go."

My answer was to rise from the table.

"You are right, Holmes. We are bound to go."

He sprang up and shook me by the hand.

"I knew you would not shrink at the last," said he, and for a moment I saw something in his eyes which was nearer to tenderness than I had ever seen. The next instant he was his masterful, practical self once more.

"It is nearly half a mile, but there is no hurry. Let us walk," said he. "Don't drop the instruments, I beg. Your arrest as a suspicious character would be a most unfortunate complication."

Caulfield Gardens was one of those lines of flat-faced, pillared and porticoed houses which are so prominent a product of the middle Victorian epoch in the West End of London. Next door there appeared to be a children's party, for the merry buzz of young voices and the clatter of a piano resounded through the night. The fog still hung about and screened us with its friendly shade. Holmes had lit his lantern and flashed it upon the massive door.

"This is a serious proposition," said he. "It is certainly bolted as well as locked. We would do better in the area. There is an excellent archway down yonder in case a too zealous policeman should intrude. Give me a hand, Watson, and I'll do the same for you."

A minute later we were both in the area. Hardly had we reached the

dark shadows before the step of the policeman was heard in the fog above. As its soft rhythm died away, Holmes set to work upon the lower door. I saw him stoop and strain until with a sharp crash it flew open. We sprang through into the dark passage, closing the area door behind us. Holmes led the way up the curving, uncarpeted stair. His little fan of yellow light shone upon a low window.

"Here we are, Watson—this must be the one." He threw it open, and as he did so there was a low, harsh murmur, growing steadily into a loud roar as a train dashed past us in the darkness. Holmes swept his light along the window-sill. It was thickly coated with soot from the passing engines, but the black surface was blurred and rubbed in places.

"You can see where they rested the body. Halloa, Watson! what is this? There can be no doubt that it is a blood mark." He was pointing to faint discolourations along the woodwork of the window. "Here it is on the stone of the stair also. The demonstration is complete. Let us stay here until a train stops."

We had not long to wait. The very next train roared from the tunnel as before, but slowed in the open, and then, with a creaking of brakes, pulled up immediately beneath us. It was not four feet from the window-ledge to the roof of the carriages. Holmes softly closed the window.

"So far we are justified," said he. "What do you think of it, Watson?"

"A masterpiece. You have never risen to a greater height."

"I cannot agree with you there. From the moment that I conceived the idea of the body being upon the roof, which surely was not a very abstruse one, all the rest was inevitable. If it were not for the grave interests involved, the affair up to this point would be insignificant. Our difficulties are still before us. But perhaps we may find something here which may help us."

We had ascended the kitchen stair and entered the suite of rooms upon the first floor. One was a dining-room, severely furnished and containing nothing of interest. A second was a bedroom, which also drew blank. The remaining room appeared more promising, and my companion settled down to a systematic examination. It was littered with books and papers, and was evidently used as a study. Swiftly and methodically Holmes turned over the contents of drawer after drawer and cupboard after cupboard, but no gleam of success came to brighten his austere face. At the end of an hour he was no further than when he started.

"The cunning dog has covered his tracks," said he. "He has left nothing to incriminate him. His dangerous correspondence has been destroyed or removed. This is our last chance."

It was a small tin cash-box which stood upon the writing-desk. Holmes pried it open with his chisel. Several rolls of paper were within, covered with figures and calculations, without any note to show to

what they referred. The recurring words, "water pressure" and "pressure to the square inch" suggested some possible relation to a submarine. Holmes tossed them all impatiently aside. There only remained an envelope with some small newspaper slips inside it. He shook them out on the table, and at once I saw by his eager face that his hopes had been raised.

"What's this, Watson? Eh? What's this? Record of a series of messages in the advertisements of a paper. *Daily Telegraph* agony column by the print and paper. Right-hand top corner of a page. No dates—but messages arrange themselves. This must be the first:

"Hoped to hear sooner. Terms agreed to. Write fully to address given on card.

"PIERROT

"Next comes:

"Too complex for description. Must have full report. Stuff awaits you when goods delivered.

"PIERROT

"Then comes:

"Matter presses. Must withdraw offer unless contract completed. Make appointment by letter. Will confirm by advertisement.

"PIERROT

"Finally:

"Monday night after nine. Two taps. Only ourselves. Do not be so suspicious, payment in hard cash when goods delivered.

"PIERROT

"A fairly complete record, Watson! If we could only get at the man at the other end!" He sat lost in thought, tapping his fingers on the table. Finally he sprang to his feet.

"Well, perhaps it won't be so difficult, after all. There is nothing more to be done here, Watson. I think we might drive round to the offices of the *Daily Telegraph*, and so bring a good day's work to a conclusion."

Mycroft Holmes and Lestrade had come round by appointment after breakfast next day and Sherlock Holmes had recounted to them our proceedings of the day before. The professional shook his head over our confessed burglary.

"We can't do these things in the force, Mr. Holmes," said he. "No wonder you get results that are beyond us. But some of these days you'll go too far, and you'll find yourself and your friend in trouble."

"For England, home and beauty—eh, Watson? Martyrs on the altar of our country. But what do you think of it, Mycroft?"

"Excellent, Sherlock! Admirable! But what use will you make of it?"

Holmes picked up the *Daily Telegraph* which lay upon the table.

"Have you seen Pierrot's advertisement to-day?"

"What? Another one?"

"Yes, here it is:

"To-night. Same hour. Same place. Two taps. Most vitally important. Your own safety at stake.

"PIERROT."

"By George!" cried Lestrade. "If he answers that we've got him!"

"That was my idea when I put it in. I think if you could both make it convenient to come with us about eight o'clock to Caulfield Gardens we might possibly get a little nearer to a solution."

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Sherlock Holmes was his power of throwing his brain out of action and switching all his thoughts on to lighter things whenever he had convinced himself that he could no longer work to advantage. I remember that during the whole of that memorable day he lost himself in a monograph which he had undertaken upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus. For my own part I had none of this power of detachment, and the day, in consequence, appeared to be interminable. The great national importance of the issue, the suspense in high quarters, the direct nature of the experiment which we were trying—all combined to work upon my nerve. It was a relief to me when at last, after a light dinner, we set out upon our expedition. Lestrade and Mycroft met us by appointment at the outside of Gloucester Road Station. The area door of Oberstein's house had been left open the night before, and it was necessary for me, as Mycroft Holmes absolutely and indignantly declined to climb the railings, to pass in and open the hall door. By nine o'clock we were all seated in the study, waiting patiently for our man.

An hour passed and yet another. When eleven struck, the measured beat of the great church clock seemed to sound the dirge of our hopes. Lestrade and Mycroft were fidgeting in their seats and looking twice a minute at their watches. Holmes sat silent and composed, his eyelids half shut, but every sense on the alert. He raised his head with a sudden jerk.

"He is coming," said he.

There had been a furtive step past the door. Now it returned. We heard a shuffling sound outside, and then two sharp taps with the knocker. Holmes rose, motioning to us to remain seated. The gas in the hall was a mere point of light. He opened the outer door, and then as a dark figure slipped past him he closed and fastened it. "This way!" we heard him say, and a moment later our man stood before us. Holmes had followed him closely, and as the man turned with a cry of surprise and alarm he caught him by the collar and threw him back into the room. Before our prisoner had recovered his balance the door was shut and Holmes standing with his back against it. The man glared round him, staggered, and fell senseless upon the floor. With the shock, his broad-brimmed hat flew from his head, his cravat slipped down from his lips, and there were the long light beard and the soft, handsome delicate features of Colonel Valentine Walter.

Holmes gave a whistle of surprise.

"You can write me down an ass this time, Watson," said he. "This was not the bird that I was looking for."

"Who is he?" asked Mycroft eagerly.

"The younger brother of the late Sir James Walter, the head of the Submarine Department. Yes, yes; I see the fall of the cards. He is coming to. I think that you had best leave his examination to me."

We had carried the prostrate body to the sofa. Now our prisoner sat up, looked round him with a horror-stricken face, and passed his hand over his forehead, like one who cannot believe his own senses.

"What is this?" he asked. "I came here to visit Mr. Oberstein."

"Everything is known, Colonel Walter," said Holmes. "How an English gentleman could behave in such a manner is beyond my comprehension. But your whole correspondence and relations with Oberstein are within our knowledge. So also are the circumstances connected with the death of young Cadogan West. Let me advise you to gain at least the small credit for repentance and confession, since there are still some details which we can only learn from your lips."

The man groaned and sank his face in his hands. We waited, but he was silent.

"I can assure you," said Holmes, "that every essential is already known. We know that you were pressed for money; that you took an impress of the keys which your brother held; and that you entered into a correspondence with Oberstein, who answered your letters through the advertisement columns of the *Daily Telegraph*. We are aware that you went down to the office in the fog on Monday night, but that you were seen and followed by young Cadogan West, who had probably some previous reason to suspect you. He saw your theft, but could not give the alarm, as it was just possible that you were taking the papers to your brother in London. Leaving all his private concerns like the good

citizen that he was, he followed you closely in the fog and kept at your heels until you reached this very house. There he intervened, and then it was, Colonel Walter, that to treason you added the more terrible crime of murder."

"I did not! I did not! Before God I swear that I did not!" cried our wretched prisoner.

"Tell us, then, how Cadogan West met his end before you laid him upon the roof of a railway carriage."

"I will. I swear to you that I will. I did the rest. I confess it. It was just as you say. A Stock Exchange debt had to be paid. I needed the money badly. Oberstein offered me five thousand. It was to save myself from ruin. But as to murder, I am as innocent as you."

"What happened, then?"

"He had his suspicions before, and he followed me as you describe. I never knew it until I was at the very door. It was thick fog, and one could not see three yards. I had given two taps and Oberstein had come to the door. The young man rushed up and demanded to know what we were about to do with the papers. Oberstein had a short life-preserver. He always carried it with him. As West forced his way after us into the house Oberstein struck him on the head. The blow was a fatal one. He was dead within five minutes. There he lay in the hall, and we were at our wit's end what to do. Then Oberstein had this idea about the trains which halted under his back window. But first he examined the papers which I had brought. He said that three of them were essential, and that he must keep them. 'You cannot keep them,' said I. 'There will be a dreadful row at Woolrich if they are not returned.' 'I must keep them,' said he, 'for they are so technical that it is impossible in the time to make copies.' 'Then they must all go back together to-night,' said I. He thought for a little, and then he cried out that he had it. 'Three I will keep,' said he. 'The others we will stuff into the pocket of this young man. When he is found the whole business will assuredly be put to his account. I could see no other way out of it, so we did as he suggested. We waited half an hour at the window before a train stopped. It was so thick that nothing could be seen, and we had no difficulty in lowering West's body on to the train. That was the end of the matter so far as I was concerned."

"And your brother?"

"He said nothing, but he had caught me once with his keys, and I think that he suspected. I read in his eyes that he suspected. As you know, he never held up his head again."

There was silence in the room. It was broken by Mycroft Holmes.

"Can you not make reparation? It would ease your conscience, and possibly your punishment."

"What reparation can I make?"

"Where is Oberstein with the papers?"

"I do not know."

"Did he give you no address?"

"He said that letters to the Hôtel du Louvre, Paris, would eventually reach him."

"Then reparation is still within your power," said Sherlock Holmes.

"I will do anything I can. I owe this fellow no particular good-will. He has been my ruin and my downfall."

"Here are paper and pen. Sit at this desk and write to my dictation. Direct the envelope to the address given. That is right. Now the letter:

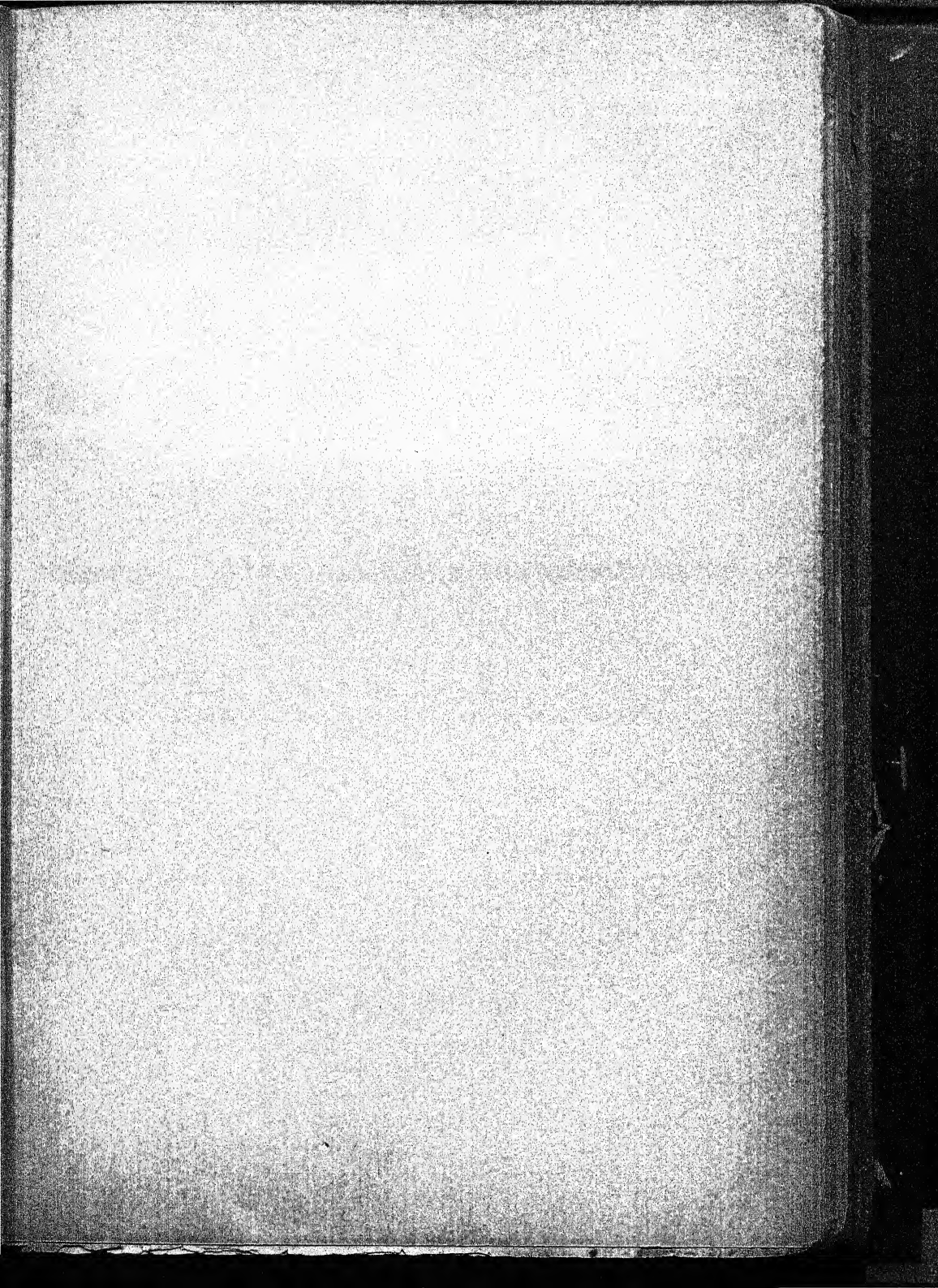
"DEAR SIR:

"With regard to our transaction, you will no doubt have observed by now that one essential detail is missing. I have a tracing which will make it complete. This has involved me in extra trouble, however, and I must ask you for a further advance of five hundred pounds. I will not trust it to the post, nor will I take anything but gold or notes. I would come to you abroad, but it would excite remark if I left the country at present. Therefore I shall expect to meet you in the smoking-room of the Charing Cross Hotel at noon on Saturday. Remember that only English notes, or gold, will be taken.

That will do very well. I shall be very much surprised if it does not fetch our man."

And it did! It is a matter of history—that secret history of a nation which is often so much more intimate and interesting than its public chronicles—that Oberstein, eager to complete the coup of his lifetime, came to the lure and was safely engulfed for fifteen years in a British prison. In his trunk were found the invaluable Bruce-Partington plans, which he had put up for auction in all the naval centers of Europe.

Colonel Walter died in prison towards the end of the second year of his sentence. As to Holmes, he returned refreshed to his monograph upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus, which has since been printed for private circulation, and is said by experts to be the last word upon the subject. Some weeks afterward I learned incidentally that my friend spent a day at Windsor, whence he returned with a remarkably fine emerald tie-pin. When I asked him if he had bought it, he answered that it was a present from a certain gracious lady in whose interests he had once been fortunate enough to carry out a small commission. He said no more; but I fancy that I could guess at that lady's august name, and I have little doubt that the emerald pin will forever recall to my friend's memory the adventure of the Bruce-Partington plans.



AMBROSE BIERCE

More people perhaps are familiar with the Ambrose Bierce mythos than with the Ambrose Bierce opera. This great American short-story writer disappeared in Mexico some thirty years ago, after years of popular neglect, and became a national legend. Many stories are told to explain his end, of which the most likely is that he was executed by some of the bloodthirsty followers of the bandit Villa. The tragically appropriate manner of his passing—like the pattern of one of his own macabre tales—has helped his fame, which will always be higher because of the mystery that masks his death. One of the bitterest cynics of his time, he is the American Jonathan Swift; his savage humor is eloquent in almost everything he ever wrote. He turned to literature after the close of the Civil War, in which as an officer he served with distinction and was twice wounded. His best work was done in the short-story field, and at least a dozen of his tales are masterpieces of war or terror or both. Parker Adderson, Philosopher, although not one of his best stories, is fairly typical of his mood. The contrasting figures of the Federal spy and the Confederate general are very effective and remain in the memory long after the story has been laid aside. This is the only spy story based on the Civil War that has been given place in our anthology.

PARKER ADDERSON, PHILOSOPHER

"PRISONER, what is your name?"

"As I am to lose it at daylight tomorrow morning it is hardly worth while concealing it. Parker Adderson."

"Your rank?"

"A somewhat humble one; commissioned officers are too precious to be risked in the perilous business of a spy. I am a sergeant."

"Of what regiment?"

"You must excuse me; my answer might, for anything I know, give you an idea of whose forces are in your front. Such knowledge as that is what I came into your lines to obtain, not to impart."

"You are not without wit."

"If you have the patience to wait you will find me dull enough tomorrow."

"How do you know that you are to die tomorrow morning?"

"Among spies captured by night that is the custom. It is one of the nice observances of the profession."

The general so far laid aside the dignity appropriate to a Confederate officer of high rank and wide renown as to smile. But no one in his power and out of his favor would have drawn any happy augury from that outward and visible sign of approval. It was neither genial nor infectious; it did not communicate itself to the other persons exposed to it—the caught spy who had provoked it and the armed guard who had

brought him into the tent and now stood a little apart, watching his prisoner in the yellow candle-light. It was no part of that warrior's duty to smile; he had been detailed for another purpose. The conversation was resumed; it was in character a trial for a capital offense.

"You admit, then, that you are a spy—that you came into my camp, disguised as you are in the uniform of a Confederate soldier, to obtain information secretly regarding the numbers and disposition of my troops."

"Regarding, particularly, their numbers. Their disposition I already knew. It is morose."

The general brightened again; the guard, with a severer sense of his responsibility, accentuated the austerity of his expression and stood a trifle more erect than before. Twirling his gray slouch hat round and round upon his forefinger, the spy took a leisurely survey of his surroundings. They were simple enough. The tent was a common "wall tent," about eight feet by ten in dimensions, lighted by a single tallow candle stuck into the haft of a bayonet, which was itself stuck into a pine table at which the general sat, now busily writing and apparently forgetful of his unwilling guest. An old rag carpet covered the earthen floor; and older leather trunk, a second chair and a roll of blankets were about all else that the tent contained; in General Clavering's command Confederate simplicity and penury of "pomp and circumstance" had attained their highest development. On a large nail driven into the tent pole at the entrance was suspended a sword-belt supporting a long sabre, a pistol in its holster and, absurdly enough, a bowie-knife. Of that most unmilitary weapon it was the general's habit to explain that it was souvenir of the peaceful days when he was a civilian.

It was a stormy night. The rain cascaded upon the canvas in torrents, with the dull, drum-like sound familiar to dwellers in tents. As the whooping blasts charged upon it the frail structure shook and swayed and strained at its confining stakes and ropes.

The general finished writing, folded the half-sheet of paper and spoke to the soldier guarding Adderson: "Here, Tassman, take that to the adjutant-general; then return."

"And the prisoner, General?" said the soldier, saluting, with an inquiring glance in the direction of that unfortunate.

"Do as I said," replied the officer curtly.

The soldier took the note and ducked himself out of the tent. General Clavering turned his handsome face toward the Federal spy, looked him in the eyes, not unkindly, and said: "It is a bad night, my man."

"For me, yes."

"Do you guess what I have written?"

"Something worth reading, I dare say. And—perhaps it is my vanity—I venture to suppose that I am mentioned in it."

"Yes; it is a memorandum for an order to be read to the troops at *reveille* concerning your execution. Also some notes for the guidance of the provost-marshal in arranging the details of that event."

"I hope, General, the spectacle will be intelligently arranged, for I shall attend it myself."

"Have you any arrangements of your own that you wish to make? Do you wish to see a chaplain, for example?"

"I could hardly secure a longer rest for myself by depriving him of some of his."

"Good God, man! do you mean to go to your death with nothing but jokes upon your lips? Do you know that this is a serious matter?"

"How can I know that? I have never been dead in all my life. I have heard that death is a serious matter, but never from any of those who have experienced it."

The general was silent for a moment; the man interested, perhaps amused him—a type not previously encountered.

"Death," he said, "is at least a loss—a loss of such happiness as we have, and of opportunities for more."

"A loss of which we shall never be conscious can be borne with composure and therefore expected without apprehension. You must have observed, General, that of all the dead men with whom it is your soldierly pleasure to strew your path none shows signs of regret."

"If the being dead is not a regrettable condition, yet the becoming so—the act of dying—appears to be distinctly disagreeable to one who has not lost the power to feel."

"Pain is disagreeable, no doubt. I never suffer it without more or less discomfort. But he who lives longest is most exposed to it. What you call dying is simply the last pain—there is really no such thing as dying. Suppose, for illustration, that I attempt to escape. You lift the revolver that you are courteously concealing in your lap, and—"

The general blushed like a girl, then laughed softly, disclosing his brilliant teeth, made a slight inclination of his handsome head and said nothing. The spy continued: "You fire, and I have in my stomach what I did not swallow. I fall, but am not dead. After a half-hour of agony I am dead. But at any given instant of that half-hour I was either alive or dead. There is no transition period."

"When I am hanged tomorrow morning it will be quite the same; while conscious I shall be living, when dead, unconscious. Nature appears to have ordered the matter quite in my interest—the way that I should have ordered it myself. It is so simple," he added with a smile, "that it seems hardly worth while to be hanged at all."

At the finish of his remarks there was a long silence. The general sat impassive, looking into the man's face, but apparently not attentive to what had been said. It was as if his eyes had mounted guard over the prisoner while his mind concerned itself with other matters. Presently he drew a long, deep breath, shuddered, as one awakened from a dreadful dream, and exclaimed almost inaudibly: "Death is horrible!"—this man of death.

"It was horrible to our savage ancestors," said the spy, gravely, "because they had not enough intelligence to dissociate the idea of consciousness from the idea of the physical forms in which it is manifested—as an even lower order of intelligence, that of the monkey, for example, may be unable to imagine a house without inhabitants, and seeing a ruined hut fancies a suffering occupant. To us it is horrible because we have inherited the tendency to think it so, accounting for the notion by wild and fanciful theories of another world—as names of places give rise to legends explaining them and reasonless conduct to philosophies in justification. You can hang me, General, but there your power of evil ends; you cannot condemn me to heaven."

The general appeared not to have heard; the spy's talk had merely turned his thoughts into an unfamiliar channel, but there they pursued their will independently to conclusions of their own. The storm had ceased, and something of the solemn spirit of the night had imparted itself to his reflections, giving them the sombre tinge of a supernatural dread. Perhaps there was an element of prescience in it. "I should not like to die," he said—"not tonight."

He was interrupted—if, indeed, he had intended to speak further—by the entrance of an officer of his staff, Captain Hasterlick, the provost-marshal. This recalled him to himself; the absent look passed away from his face.

"Captain," he said, acknowledging the officer's salute, "this man is a Yankee spy captured inside our lines with incriminating papers on him. He has confessed. How is the weather?"

"The storm is over, sir, and the moon shining."

"Good; take a file of men, conduct him at once to the parade ground, and shoot him."

A sharp cry broke from the spy's lips. He threw himself forward, thrust out his neck, expanded his eyes, clenched his hands.

"Good God!" he cried, hoarsely, almost inarticulately; "you do not mean that! You forget—I am not to die until morning."

"I have said nothing of morning," replied the general, coldly; "that was an assumption of your own. You die now."

"But, General, I beg—I implore you to remember; I am to hang! It will take some time to erect the gallows—two hours—an hour. Spies are

hanged; I have rights under military law. For Heaven's sake, General, consider how short—"

"Captain, observe my directions."

The officer drew his sword and fixing his eyes upon the prisoner pointed silently to the opening of the tent. The prisoner hesitated; the officer grasped him by the collar and pushed him gently forward. As he approached the tent pole the frantic man sprang to it and with cat-like agility seized the handle of the bowie-knife, plucked the weapon from the scabbard and thrusting the captain aside leaped upon the general with a fury of a madman, hurling him to the ground and falling headlong upon him as he lay. The table was overturned, the candle extinguished and they fought blindly in the darkness. The provost-marshal sprang to the assistance of his superior officer and was himself prostrated upon the struggling forms. Curses and inarticulate cries of rage and pain came from the welter of limbs and bodies; the tent came down upon them and beneath its hampering and enveloping folds the struggle went on. Private Tassman, returning from his errand and dimly conjecturing the situation, threw down his rifle and laying hold of the flouncing canvas at random vainly tried to drag it off the men under it; and the sentinel who paced up and down in front, not daring to leave his beat though the skies should fall, discharged his rifle. The report alarmed the camp; drums beat the long roll and bugles sounded the assembly, bringing swarms of half-clad men into the moonlight, dressing as they ran, and falling into line at the sharp commands of their officers. This was well; being in line the men were under control; they stood at arms while the general's staff and the men of his escort brought order out of confusion by lifting off the fallen tent and pulling apart the breathless and bleeding actors in that strange contention.

Breathless, indeed, was one: the captain was dead; the handle of the bowie-knife, protruding from his throat, was pressed back beneath his chin until the end had caught in the angle of the jaw and the hand that delivered the blow had been unable to remove the weapon. In the dead man's hand was his sword, clenched with a grip that defied the strength of the living. Its blade was streaked with red to the hilt.

Lifted to his feet, the general sank back to the earth with a moan and fainted. Besides his bruises he had two sword-thrusts—one through the thigh, the other through the shoulder.

The spy had suffered the least damage. Apart from a broken right arm, his wounds were such only as might have been incurred in an ordinary combat with nature's weapons. But he was dazed and seemed hardly to know what had occurred. He shrank away from those attending him, cowered upon the ground and uttered unintelligible remonstrances. His face, swollen by blows and stained with gouts of blood,

nevertheless showed white beneath his disheveled hair—as white as that of a corpse.

“The man is not insane,” said the surgeon, preparing bandages and replying to a question; “he is suffering from fright. Who and what is he?”

Private Tassman began to explain. It was the opportunity of his life; he omitted nothing that could in any way accentuate the importance of his own relation to the night’s events. When he had finished his story and was ready to begin it again nobody gave him any attention.

The general had now recovered consciousness. He raised himself upon his elbow, looked about him, and, seeing the spy crouching by a campfire, guarded, said simply:

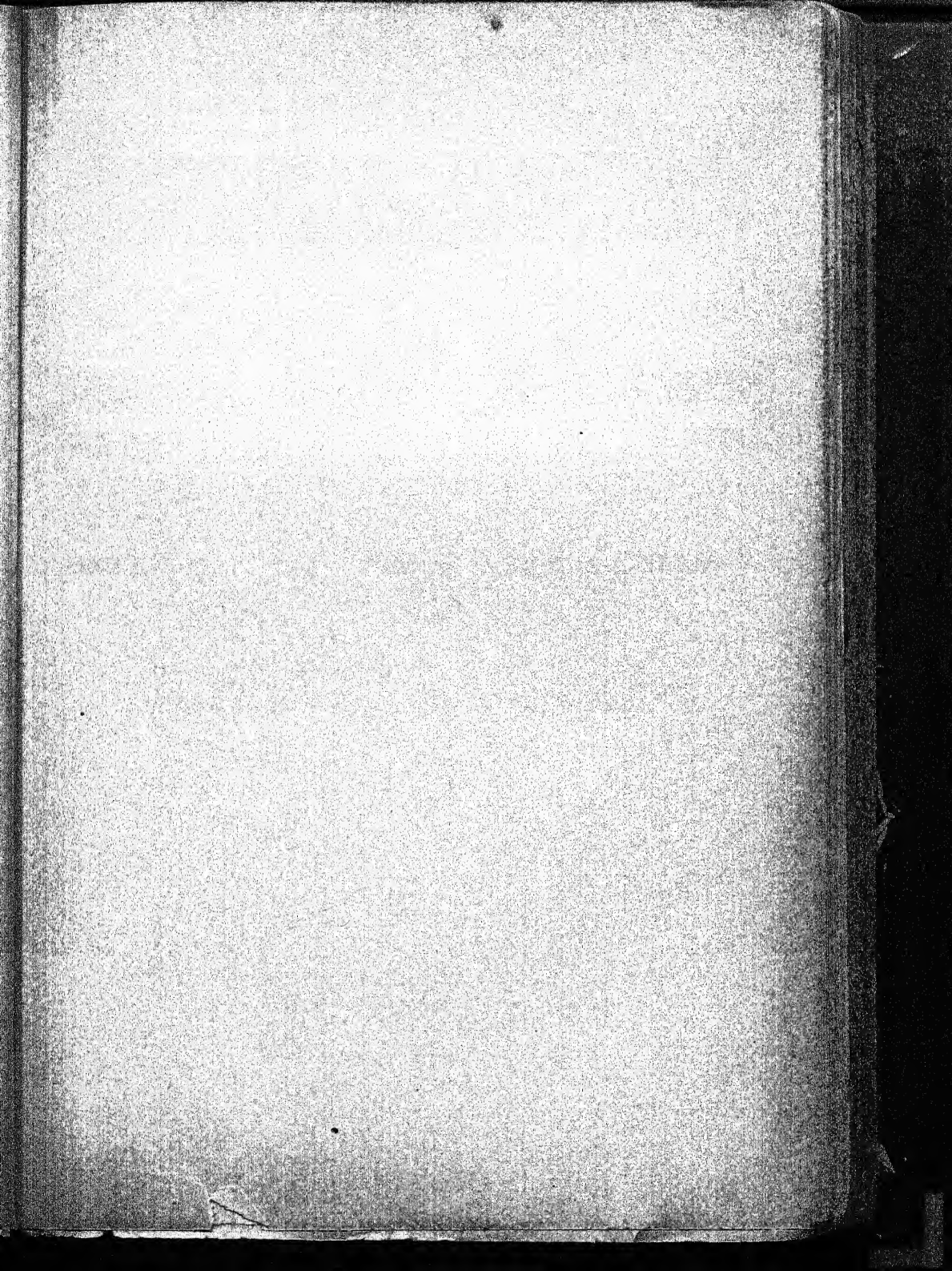
“Take that man to the parade ground and shoot him.”

“The general’s mind wanders,” said an officer standing near.

“His mind does not wander,” the adjutant-general said. “I have a memorandum from him about this business; he had given that same order to Hasterlick”—with a motion of the hand toward the dead provost-marshal—“and, by God! it shall be executed.”

Ten minutes later Sergeant Parker Adderson, of the Federal army, philosopher and wit, kneeling in the moonlight and begging incoherently for his life, was shot to death by twenty men. As the volley rang out upon the keen air of the midnight, General Clavering, lying white and still in the red glow of the campfire, opened his big blue eyes, looked pleasantly upon those about him and said: “How silent it all is!”

The surgeon looked at the adjutant-general, gravely and significantly. The patient’s eyes slowly closed, and thus he lay for a few moments; then, his face suffused with a smile of ineffable sweetness, he said, faintly: “I suppose this must be death,” and so passed away.



DENNIS WHEATLEY

This is the sort of story you may expect to hear when and if you go down to Wimplehays to see the roses. Pottering about in their famous rose gardens, between wars, or waiting for calls that will send them out on dangerous adventures at a moment's notice—with no more preparation than a quick whisky-and-soda—are any number of retired members of the English secret service; and they all have yarns to spin. On the whole, I should say that this one, written by Dennis Wheatley, is one of the better tales. I won't say that Lisabetta isn't a bit on the conventional side—I mean I've met her fairly often in stories by other writers and called by other names—but she's an interesting girl wherever you meet her. You'll recognize her by her eyes as soon as you hear that they are "a queer tawny color flecked with green." I don't know why most female spies have green eyes, or eyes flecked with green, but that's the way it is, and it does lend them a certain sinister attraction. And that's all I'm going to tell you about Mr. Wheatley's story, except that somewhere along in the middle he mentions a booby-trap, which he describes as "a Heath Robinson affair." American readers may be baffled by that. Heath Robinson, be it therefore known, is an English comic artist whose American counterpart, in the connection mentioned, is Rube Goldberg.

ESPIONAGE

I REALLY WENT DOWN to Wimpehays to see the roses. Roses are a bit of a passion with me, and Rowley Thornton's garden has a reputation. It was after lunch, as we were sauntering along the flower-bordered paths, with the blue haze of our cigar smoke circling about our heads in the sunshine, that the talk turned to espionage.

"That army-officer case was incredible," I said. "I had no idea that such things still happened in these days."

"Hadn't you?" he turned to smile at me, the little wrinkles creasing up at the corners of his blue eyes. "Well, they do. I nearly lost my life in Paris less than a month ago——"

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean that—would it be—er—infringing the Official Secrets Act, or anything, to tell me about it?"

"I don't think so," he answered slowly. "You see, I left the service years ago, so in a sense this was a private venture—but I must change the names, of course."

I nodded, glancing at the tall, slim figure by my side with newly awakened interest. He paused a second to run his hand over the smoothly brushed hair just greying at the temples, and then went on thoughtfully:

I was on my way down to St. Tropez, and when I left London I hadn't a thought in my head except the joys of a fortnight's cruise

round the Balearic Isles in Larry Hinchcliffe's yacht. I got down into this wretched business only because fate decreed that I should choose one particular compartment on the Calais train.

There was only one other fellow in it, a smallish man in a neat dark blue suit and a black slouch hat, and he was already working on a pile of invoices when I got in, so I took him for an ordinary business man. Then, just as the train was about to steam out for Paris, there was a terrific commotion in the corridor—train conductors, porters, Cook's men, luggage, and a girl.

I suppose I should say "woman" really, since she couldn't have been under thirty. She had on a little hat which showed off her hair to perfection—bronze gold with a tinge of red in it, but her eyebrows were her really striking feature—long, thin, and tapering, they curved up like the moustaches of a musketeer. I didn't know then what had upset her, but she seemed to be in a towering rage and her face was as white as a sheet.

She stood there in the doorway telling the crowd what she thought of them. Her French was appalling, and I doubt if they understood one-third of what she said. They seemed half apologetic and half surly as they stowed her baggage on the racks and seats.

When they had gone she suddenly put one hand to her tummy and half closed her eyes. I thought she was going to faint and made a move to steady her, but she shook her head and sank into the other corner on the same side as myself.

As the train moved off she sat up and turned a large pair of angry eyes on me. "You are not French?" she said.

"English," I answered, gazing back. Her eyes were a queer tawny colour flecked with green.

Then she looked at the other fellow, "And you, monsieur?"

"Norwegian," he told her with a little bow.

"Ach, Gott sei dank—these French are horrible," she exclaimed.

She was an unusual type and obviously intelligent, so I inquired her nationality, although it was already pretty certain what it was.

"I am a German," she shot at me with an angry lift of her chin, "but I might be a leper from the way they treat me here. You speak German perhaps?"

I nodded and she broke into a violent diatribe in her own tongue. She was on her way back to Germany apparently and should have caught the train that left ten minutes earlier than mine. On account of her nationality the French had put her passport aside to be dealt with last, and gone through her luggage with a tooth-comb. In consequence she'd missed her train and, worse, her sleeper on the Berlin express. That meant she'd have to spend a quite unnecessary night in Paris, and her long tapering eyebrows went up into her bronze-gold

hair as she scowled over the iniquities of the French. To crown it all, she said, she was only just recovering from an operation and hardly fit to travel—yet, in spite of that, they'd kept her standing on the platform in agony for over half an hour.

The Norwegian had been busy with his papers all the time, and when she suddenly swung on him and asked: "Do you not also think it is disgraceful of them?" he looked up with a puzzled stare.

"Excuse please, Fräulein—my German is not much." So she turned back to me exclaiming: "Achl I feel so ill."

I suggested that she might like to put her feet up, and moved over to the other side of the compartment to give her room; for the first time her face broke into a smile.

"What about a little cognac?" I went on. "I've got some in my bag—it will do you good."

Those curious eyes lit up her face in an extraordinary manner as she thanked me, and I got out my flask. Then she gave me another little smile—said she would try to rest a little, and wriggled down to her full length.

After that I sat staring out of the window for a bit—somehow I'd lost all interest in my book. Then I began to study the Norwegian in an idle way.

I had been facing him before, but now that I could see him in profile it struck me that there was something familiar about his face. It was his nose that reminded me of someone—a long, thin, knife-like affair, but for the life of me I couldn't think where I'd seen a beak like that before.

"Ein Bischen mehr Branntwein, bitte?"

It was the girl speaking of course, and I fumbled for my flask. "More brandy?" I asked stupidly. "Oh yes, of course—here you are."

I gave her the cup, but my mind had flashed back twenty years to a hovel in the slums of Cairo. Those very words had been spoken then by a man whose nose was the twin of the ugly proboscis in the corner.

The girl closed her eyes and I was free to regard the pictures in my brain. Essenbach had given us endless trouble in the old days, fermenting discontent all over the Levant. Towards the end of the war a chap, whom we'll call Manning, and I had run him to earth in Cairo. He fought like a devil when we cornered him, but Manning broke an earthenware pitcher over his head, and it was while we were bringing him round that he asked for more brandy.

He broke prison, and got away—the Armistice came soon after and I hadn't heard a word about him since.

I took another look at the "Norwegian." His build was right. Then I glanced at his hands—and that settled the matter. Hands are a mar-

vellous index to character, and almost impossible to disguise—this bird was Essenbach all right.

I should have assumed him to have been out of the game for years—just like myself, but the story about his being a Norwegian set me thinking. He had come from England—and he couldn't have been up to any good.

In the hope of a line I looked up at his luggage and I saw "Felixstowe" on a railway label at one end of his bag.

Well, Felixstowe is only just across the water from Harwich, you know, but somehow there didn't seem much to interest a German of Essenbach's standing there. Then I got another idea: what about Martlesham, the R.A.F. experimental station?—a much more likely spot than Harwich for picking up really important information.

The woman with the intriguing eyebrows sat up as we passed through Amiens. She was looking better for her nap, and after powdering her nose, settled herself in her corner and started to chat.

I soon found that we had certain friends in common, mostly among the old ex-officer class in Berlin, and I began to wonder who she could be, but I couldn't lead her on to talk about herself at all.

We had slowed down and were rumbling through Asnières before I realized how time had flown, and in another few minutes we were all collecting our things.

I don't mind confessing that I should have liked to follow up my acquaintance with that interesting young woman, but I couldn't even offer to see her to a taxi—I had Essenbach to attend to.

I passed the barrier a good twenty yards ahead of him, and got under cover in a taxi before he appeared in the station yard.

He had a good look round before he jumped into a cab. I tapped on my man's window, and we set off after him down the Rue Lafayette. We nearly lost him at the Opéra, but spotted him again in the Rue de la Paix. As we entered the Place Vendôme I saw that he had pulled up at the Ritz.

I made my chap drive on through the square and then round to the back of the hotel—the entrance to the bar. I paid him off and walked slowly down that endless corridor lined with show cases. I wanted to give Essenbach time to register before I appeared. As I poked my nose round the corner a page was leading him to the lift. I went over to the desk and asked for a room, but I'd hardly spoken to the clerk when I heard a soft voice behind me, and there was the lady of the tawny eyes and intriguing eyebrows.

She gave her name to the other clerk as *Fräulein Lisabetta von Löwering*, but I hadn't time to stop and talk to her.

Five minutes later another taxi set me down at the gates of the British Embassy. I walked through into the courtyard and entered the

block of office buildings on the right. I was in luck. The office staff had gone of course, but little—well, let's call him Harvey—was still there.

"Well, Thornton," he grinned at me, "glad to see you—take a seat."

"Know who's come in on the boat train?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"Kurt Essenbach," I said.

"Essenbach?" he repeated. "You mean the chap who went Bolshie after the war and then returned to the German service in 1929? That's interesting—we haven't heard a thing about him for the last two years. What's he up to now?"

"That's your job—not mine," I told him, but I mentioned the Felixstowe label and suggested Martlesham as a possibility.

"I'd better get through to London," he said, and in a few moments he was talking to someone round the corner from Whitehall. When he put down the receiver his face was grave.

It seemed that I was right. Two days before one of the draughtsmen on the civil side had disappeared from Martlesham. Steady fellow—been working there for eighteen months. Essenbach of course—taking his time. The police had failed to trace him, so they set a watch on the ports and got our people to put a man on every boat. He'd slipped through at Dover, but the service man had picked him up half-way across—spotted the Felixstowe label—careless that, for an old hand. Anyhow they had wired from Calais and were following him to Paris.

I learned too that Essenbach had been working in the special room because one of the seniors had gone sick—just the chance he'd been waiting for—and although the blue prints were intact it was a hundred to one he'd got a set of tracings from the diagram of the new Supermarine. It looked serious to me.

Harvey said that a special man had been sent over by 'plane, and in the meantime the chap who had spotted Essenbach on the boat would be sitting on his tail.

I felt a bit sick that I hadn't known they were on to him earlier—having hurried to the Embassy had spoilt my chances of what might have developed into something interesting, and as I stood up I told Harvey casually of my meeting with Fräulein Lisabetta.

He was on me like a flash and cursed me for not having mentioned her before. You see, no first-class espionage man ever holds anything a second longer than he need. There is nearly always a messenger to meet him somewhere and relieve him of his stuff. I had left the compartment for a few moments just before we reached Chantilly, so anything might have happened then, and if I hadn't been so rusty I should have thought of it before. Harvey was insistent that she had been sent to meet him, and when I thought it over I felt it was ten to one that he was right.

"We've got to get her, Thornton," he said sharply. "You see that, don't you? Our people are after him, only you and I know about her."

Well, I didn't like the job a bit, so I suggested that he should either get in touch with the London men or call in the French.

He told me that I ought to know that all London agents report direct—not to him, he wouldn't know them if he saw them—and that they didn't even know each other. As for the French, we were up against them just as much as all the rest in these days. If they laid hands on those tracings they would photograph them for a certainty before they passed them on to us.

"Why not get on to London again?" I asked. "Tell them what we suspect and they can instruct their people over here."

"But, damn it, man, you know the woman already!" he protested. "Look at the lead you've got—give her some dinner somewhere. One of the porters at the Ritz is on my Paris list—he'll search her room while she's with you."

I didn't like the idea, and I said so, but he began to plead with me.

"Now look here, Thornton; this is really serious. If those tracings reach their destination they may do us untold harm. This woman's got to be separated from her luggage for an hour or two—and it's up to you."

Well, it was a service matter and I had no alternative but to give in, so I told him I'd telephone if I could arrange it.

My talk with Harvey hadn't lasted more than twenty minutes, so I was back at the hotel under half an hour, and directly I reached my room I sat down to write a very formal and guarded note. I felt that was the best line and I was right.

Ten minutes after I had sent the letter to her room she telephoned; said how kind it was of me to think of her—that she was feeling better and would like to dine, provided I did not mind that she was not permitted to dance afterwards—then she asked what restaurant I suggested.

I mentioned one or two and we settled on the Tour d'Argent.

I took the opportunity of securing her room number by inquiring at the office which room I had been talking to, and I found that she was next to Essenbach—on the same floor as myself. That settled it in my mind that they were acting together. You see, it is so handy to have another room near your own into which you can slip, when you are liable to be beaten up at any moment.

I told Harvey what I had done, and he asked me to ring him again at a Passy number before I left the Tour d'Argent. He would have heard then from his man at the Ritz.

When the Lady Lisabetta joined me in the hall an hour or so later, she looked more charming than ever.

I should have enjoyed that dinner if I hadn't known what was going on behind the scenes. In the war, of course, I'd become hardened to

dealing with the actress-courtesan type who dabbles in espionage, but this was a woman of distinction, so you can imagine how I disliked the false position I was in!

After we had finished dinner I excused myself for a moment and got Harvey on the 'phone. "Well," I asked, "all serene?"

But it wasn't—his man had drawn blank at the hotel, so she must have the goods on her, and my heart sank like a stone. You see, I knew what was coming next before he spoke.

"You know the drill?" he said.

I knew the drill all right, but I told him I couldn't do it—he must send one of his Paris people along to take over—but he protested that anyone who didn't know her wouldn't have a chance—and wanted to know what sort of midsummer madness I was suffering from.

Then of course I realized where I was drifting. If she had been old and ugly it would never have entered my head to kick at being asked to take the usual steps. As it was, I just hated the idea, but I had to go through with it.

"All right," I agreed reluctantly, "where?"

He told me he would send along a man in a red muffler and black cap to pick me up.

When I rejoined her I suggested another ration of the Old Original Chartreuse. I wanted to give Harvey's man time to reach the Tour d'Argent, and as we weren't going on anywhere she agreed, so we sat there for a bit drinking that marvellous liqueur, which the old monks made before they were kicked out of France. I lit another cigarette and endeavoured to make amusing conversation, but it was a poor effort. She pursed up that big generous mouth of hers with a humorous look and accused me of having spotted someone more attractive than herself when I went out to telephone.

I laughed it off, of course, but I was glad when I felt enough time had elapsed to send for the bill.

Outside on the doorstep I had a quick look round—Harvey had done his job and there was the taxi. The driver's language was a joy as he wangled his cab in front of two others—I recognized him immediately by the cap and muffler.

She didn't notice that we had veered away from the direction of the Ritz until we crossed to the Place de la Concorde. Then she gave me a sharp look and asked where he was taking us. I apologized blandly enough—said I'd forgotten it before, but a friend of mine had asked me to deliver a letter personally in Paris; as I was leaving very early next day I'd thought she wouldn't mind if I dropped it on the way back that night.

She sank back in her corner with a little shrug, and I smothered a sigh of relief at her acquiescence—at least I had escaped the wretched

business of holding her down for the rest of the journey. You see, I had the rotten job of getting her to a certain house where we could commit the quite illegal act of having her searched.

A few minutes later the driver gave a sharp toot on his horn and swung the cab through a pair of big gates into the courtyard of a private house.

I got out and ran up the steps, the frosted glass door was opened almost immediately—Harvey stood waiting for me in the hall.

"Got her?" he asked at once.

I nodded. His lined face lit up with one of those rare smiles. "Good boy," he said, "bring her in."

I waited a moment, then I went out again and spoke to Lisabetta, told her a story about a business deal in which we were all interested—that the chap who owned the house wanted to write a note for me to take south, and pressed her to come in for five minutes while he did it.

She leant forward, and I just caught her smile in the light from the open doorway. "Colonel Thornton," the eyebrows rose—"this is Paris—a strange house—and it is late! But I think it would be amusing to trust you!"

A fat, motherly old person showed us into a room on the ground floor. Harvey was standing in front of the fireplace—and he wasted no time in formalities.

He said straight out that he was there to safeguard certain interests of his Government. That he knew she had travelled from Calais with a man named Essenbach, who was in the German Secret Service, and that she must hand over anything with which she had been entrusted by him.

As I watched her face I saw a barely perceptible tightening of the mobile mouth. She knew that she'd been trapped, and she swung round on me.

"So it was for this that the kind Colonel asked me to dine? What a humiliation, and what foolishness on my part to assume that it was gallantry!"

Harvey had the grace to say that I had been acting under his instructions and that it was a service matter. Then he told her firmly that unless she did what he asked he would have her searched.

"I know nothing of Essenbach," she flared. "If you detain me here I will complain to my ambassador."

He explained to her quite patiently that it wouldn't do her any good. The house was taken furnished, and it would be untenanted five minutes after our departure.

Then she threatened to have me arrested by the police, but Harvey had her there again. He'd fixed an alibi for me with half a dozen of his friends—a card party at a private house.*

"Search, then!" She threw a contemptuous glance at me. "Search—but you will find nothing."

Harvey put his finger on the bell and the fat woman appeared in the doorway. I held the door open for Lisabetta and she left the room without a murmur.

I took out my cigarette-case, but he refused to smoke and stood there drumming on the mantelpiece with his finger-nails.

The stout woman came in again—she had a glorious Cockney accent "She ain't got a thing on 'er, Mr. 'Arvey, sir."

Harvey frowned and asked her if she was dead certain.

"Sure as my old man's in 'Eaven," she piped, as she held out a bundle of silk and lace for his inspection. "Look fer yerself, Mr. 'Arvey, sir."

We waved Lisabetta's garments away impatiently and asked how she had taken it.

"Like a lamb she did," said Phoebe. "I never 'ad the undressin' of a nicer lady, and 'er undies is that fine they must 'ave cost a fortune—not like some as we've 'ad 'ere!"

"Better take her back her things," he told her; "we shall have to keep her here a bit."

Old Phoebe grinned at him. "Very good, Mr. 'Arvey, sir—I'll make the pore dear a nice cup o' tea—just to cheer 'er up like."

As the door closed I chuckled to myself. The comic relief afforded by that old woman had been a godsend in such a trying situation, but Harvey turned on me with an angry stare.

"For God's sake don't laugh—it's a damned sight too serious," he snapped.

He'd been on the 'phone to London an hour before, and they were in a flat spin. It seems their first man had reported Essenbach's arrival at the Ritz and been told to go off duty at eight o'clock. You see it is very essential to change the shadow, otherwise you arouse the suspicions of the bird you're after. The second man should have been there to take over, but he'd been forced down by engine trouble near Folkestone and he wouldn't be in Paris till next day. In the meantime Essenbach wasn't even under observation.

That sort of breakdown doesn't happen often, but it is one of the snags in our system that no agent is supposed to know another by sight. If number two had had to report to number one, the first chap would never have gone off duty till the second turned up—still, accidents will happen, and the moment I understood I was looking every bit as worried as Harvey.

"There's only one thing for it," I told Harvey at last, "the old direct method. Telephone your porter to leave a pass-key to Essenbach's room on my writing-table. I may have to wring his neck, but I'll get those tracings somehow."

We arranged that I was to take half an hour's start. I reckoned that would be ample time to do my business—then Lisabetta was to be blindfolded—put in the taxi with Phoebe, and dropped at a quiet spot at the top end of the Tuileries Gardens. She couldn't come to any harm there, and could either take another taxi or walk back to the Ritz.

When I got to my room at the Ritz I found the pass-key on the table, so I changed into my bedroom slippers at once and tip-toed out into the corridor.

Essenbach's room was on the opposite side and about six doors down. The lights in the passage were at half-cock and not a sound broke the stillness. I passed Lisabetta's empty room and slid the key gently into the lock on Essenbach's door, it turned without a sound—then I pressed, and the door gave a trifle.

With a final shove I slipped inside—then crash! something hit me on the head, and I was sent spinning to the floor. The thing was on top of me—a great weighty object, pinning me down. I tried to struggle out from underneath it, but before I could get to my knees I got another crack on my skull.

The second blow knocked me silly for a moment, and I just wriggled feebly on the floor while a pair of quick hands ran over me. I was still half stunned, but I tried to grab my adversary's throat. Then, with a sudden sickening jab he thrust his knee into my stomach.

That finished me and by the time the pain was easing a little he had lashed my arms firmly to my sides.

The light clicked on, and there was Essenbach peering down at me—fully dressed. He had shut the door, and I saw what had knocked me endways the first time. It was a giant booby-trap—a Heath Robinson affair, but efficient. Half the furniture in the room had been used to balance a heavy steamer trunk which was bound to crash on the head of anyone who opened the door more than a foot.

Essenbach took up a hefty automatic, complete with silencer, from the table by his bed and pointed it at me. Then he said that he had been expecting my visit for the last two hours. Like a fool it had never occurred to me that his memory for faces might be as good as mine!

I struggled into a sitting position with my back against the wall, but he tapped his automatic and his eyes bored down into mine, so I had to leave it at that.

Then he began to talk in fierce soft whispers about the old days of the war and afterwards. His eyes never left my face as he told me quite calmly that he meant to do me in. He meant to ensure that I should never interfere with his future activities by recognizing him again.

Well, as you can imagine, I had the wind up pretty badly, and I felt my only chance was to scare him into clearing out at once. So I told him he could do what he damned well liked with me if he chose to

risk his neck—but he'd be far wiser to get out while the going was good—the French were after him and I'd only beaten them by a short head. Of course he didn't believe me, but it was the best card I had. Some of the old hands at the Sûreté knew him as well as I did, and if they had the least suspicion that he was in Paris with anything worth pinching on him, they would have arrested him on some trumped-up charge and searched him.

I told him that I'd been talking over his exploit with another of our people half an hour before at the Cercle Etrangère when we thought we were alone. Then, I said—as we left the room I'd spotted Moreau buried in a deep armchair. Moreau is in the Ministry of the Interior and I knew that Essenbach would know his name. I only had to add that as I left the club I'd seen Moreau hurrying to a telephone box, and I had him properly scared.

He didn't waste time talking, but jerked me to my feet and started to search my pockets. A second later he was flourishing the key of my room in my face. "Walk," he snapped at me, "to your room, Herr Oberst—and no noise!"

The muzzle of his pistol was jammed hard in the small of my back, and my hands were still tied firmly to my sides, so there didn't seem much option but to obey.

He shoved me inside my own room and shut the door behind him—then he had the cheek to ask me how long I thought it would be before the French turned up. I lied like a trooper, of course—swore they would be there any moment, and urged him to destroy the tracings before he was caught. After all, they would have been more dangerous to Germany in the hands of the French than to any other country, and I thought I might bluff him into destroying his own handiwork.

He considered that for a moment, then he shook his head. "No," he said suddenly, "I will keep them—also I will get away, but first I must make you safe—lie down."

Well, I could quite understand that he didn't want me chasing him down the corridor and I patted myself on the back for having bluffed myself out of a pretty desperate situation.

With as good a grace as possible I sat down on the floor while he secured my feet with a sash from the curtains—after that I thought he would make a bolt for it, but I found I had badly underrated his fear of the French and intense personal hatred of the English.

He seized me by the collar and dragged me across the floor to my bathroom. I didn't even struggle because I thought he was only going to lock me in, but not a bit of it—he took the cord off my dressing-gown and started to make a noose.

Can you imagine what I felt like then? I realized with a horrible suddenness that he really meant to do me in. I sat on the floor there

thinking desperately—racking my brains for some idea that would literally—save my neck. I began to talk again—quickly, feverishly—of the first thing that came into my head, anything to gain time—although how that would help me I didn't know, for the French were nothing but a myth! I told him about Lisabetta and how I'd wasted the evening leading her into a silly trap.

He stopped his preparations for a moment and stared at me with those cold eyes of his. "So," he said, "you were not then at the club?"

I saw that I'd blundered badly, but I faced it out—swore that I'd gone there after, and that if he doubted my story he had only to wait for Lisabetta to return.

Perhaps I was mistaken, but I thought I saw a sudden flicker of interest in his face, so I babbled on—it was a case of seizing any straw that might serve to turn him from his purpose.

"There's a chance for you," I said. "She'll be back in twenty minutes—you can hide in her room from the French—No. 582—it is next to yours, and she wouldn't give you away in a million years—only hurry or you'll be too late."

His only reply was to stoop down and seize me by the nose—then with his free hand he thrust a sponge into my mouth. That ended the conversation, of course, and I could only flap helplessly about on the floor like a fresh-caught salmon on the bank.

He slid the cord over the hook on the door—fixed the noose round my neck, tested the knot—and then began to hoist!

God! it was a horrible business. I dug my chin down into my chest as hard as I could, but I felt myself being drawn up in steady jerks.

Suddenly I left the ground and the cord tightened round my neck—the hook hit me on the back of the head as he gave a last heave on the cord—and there I was, dangling in the air while he lashed the end of it to the door-knob.

He supported my weight for a moment while he undid the cord that bound my hands to my sides and the curtain sash that tied my feet—then he let me drop.

The second my hands were free I was clawing at my neck, but the noose was tight about it and I couldn't get my fingers in. I couldn't shout because the sponge was in my mouth, and even when I wrenched it out I could only gurgle horribly.

Through a haze of pain and dizziness I could see Essenbach as he stood there studying me with cold deliberation. Then he tipped the bathroom chair over just out of my reach and I heard him say:

"Suicide—suicide of Colonel Thornton." After that he left me.

Well, there's one piece of advice I'd like to give anyone who is thinking of committing suicide: *Don't try hanging yourself!* It's a damn sight too painful.

To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare,
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air."

Remember?—Wilde's poem about the man in the condemned cell, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol", wasn't it? Well, that's what I did less than a month ago in Paris. Look!—you can still see the mark about my neck!

I soon stopped dancing, though—some glimmer of sanity must have penetrated the pain, and I realized that the more I jigged the more the noose tightened round my windpipe.

The cord had stretched a little, and I found that as my legs hung slack I could just touch the floor with the tip of one toe. It wasn't enough to bear my weight, but it eased the strain a fraction.

I knew then, as I hung there with the blood drumming in my ears and my eyeballs straining out of their sockets, that I had just about ten minutes to live. I couldn't see the bathroom any more—the pain became excruciating—and I fainted.

Thornton stopped talking suddenly and stopped to examine a flower-bed, leaving me breathless.

"Good God! Thornton," I exclaimed, "You're lucky to be alive. What in the world saved you?"

"Lisabetta found me and cut me down," he said casually.

"Lisabetta?" I said puzzled. "How did she come to be in your room?"

He answered my question by another. "What would you have done if you'd been in Essenbach's shoes—expecting to be arrested by the French, and desperately anxious to save your papers?"

"Hidden them," I suggested, "or taken a chance by passing them on to someone else."

"Exactly—when Lisabetta got back to her room she found him there. As one German to another he begged her to get them through. The second he'd gone she came across to me."

"I still don't understand," I murmured.

"Don't you?" his blue eyes twinkled in the sunshine. "She was our agent who spotted him on the boat, and she only played the Hun in the train on the chance of getting to know him. It's one of the rules of the service that even if your own side gets up against you through ignorance you must never show your hand until your job is done. A necessary convention for some occasions, perhaps, but in this case it nearly cost me my life."

EDGAR WALLACE

The late Edgar Wallace wrote or dictated 150 separate works in twenty-seven years, and is said to have reached new levels of the reading population, which he charmed with his "suspense, action, and excitement, humanized by a deft touch in characterization and an easy humor." It was never his aim, he confessed, to instruct or uplift, but simply and commercially to entertain—"avoiding sex problems like the plague." That is an honest statement by an honorable man, and how well he carried out his program! It is the fashion to patronize Wallace as an interesting phenomenon or decry him as a mere sensational fiction factory; but there was enough in him, man and writer, to urge a competent English critic to call him a "lost Dickens." It is surprising that, as the most prolific thriller-writer of his time, he wrote as well as he did; and frequently he wrote very well indeed. His old-fashioned, rather spinsterish detective, Mr. J. G. Reeder of Scotland Yard, is an admirable creation who will probably survive among good detectives of literature. Even so, I was a little hard-pressed to find just the right story for our collection; until Ellery Queen came through with Code No. 2, a rattling good yarn for which no apologies need be made to anybody.

CODE NO. 2

THE SECRET SERVICE never call themselves anything so melodramatic. If they speak at all, it is vaguely of "The Department"—not even "The Intelligence Department," you will note. It is a remarkable department, however, and not the least of the remarkable men who served—in a minor capacity, it is true—was Schiller.

He was an inventive young Swiss with a passion for foreign languages. He knew all the bad men in London—bad from the violently political standpoint—and was useful to the Chief Secretary (Intelligence), though Bland and the big men . . . well, they didn't dislike him, but they sort of . . . I don't know how to put it.

Watch a high-spirited horse pass a scrap of white paper on the road. He doesn't exactly shy, but he looks at the flapping thing very expectantly.

He was never in the Big Game, though he tried his best to get there. But the Big Game was played by men who "chew ciphers in the cradle," as Bland put it.

In some mysterious way Schiller got to know that Reggie Batten had been shot dead whilst extracting the mobilization orders of the 14th Bavarian Corps from a safe in Munich—this was in '11, and the sad occurrence was described as an "aviation accident."

The Munich military authorities took Reggie's body up in an aeroplane and dropped it . . . and the Munich newspapers gave poor Reggie some beautiful notices, and said that the funeral would be at two o'clock, and they hoped that all his loving friends would gather round. Such of his unsuspecting acquaintances as did gather were arrested and searched, their lodgings and baggage ransacked, and were in due course most incontinently sent across the frontier.

Bland, who was in Munich, did not attend the funeral; in fact, he left the beer city without lingering unnecessarily.

He was back in town only a day when Schiller asked for an interview.

Bland, square-chinned, clean-shaven, and wholly impassive, heard particulars of Schiller's application and laughed.

"You are altogether wrong in your view of Mr. Batten," he said. "He was unconnected with this department, and his death was due to a very deplorable accident. Therefore I cannot give you his job."

Schiller heard and bowed.

"I have been misinformed, sir," he said politely.

He went to work in another way and made a carefully planned attack upon the Chief Secretary, who had reached that delicate stage of a man's career which is represented by the interregnum between the end of a period of usefulness and the consciousness of the fact.

Sir John Grandor had been in his time the greatest Intelligence man in Europe, but now—he still talked of wireless telegraphy as "a wonderful invention."

Yet Sir John was chief, and a fairly shrewd chief. His seal of office was Code No. 2, which no mortal eye had seen save his. It lay on the bottom shelf of the safe between steel-bound covers, sheet after sheet of close writing in his own neat hand.

No. 2 Code is a very secret one. It is the code which the big agents employ. It is not printed, nor are written copies circulated, but is learnt under the tuition of the Chief himself. The men who know Code No. 2 do not boast of their knowledge, because their lives hang upon a thread—even in peace time.

Schiller could never be a big agent. For one thing, he was a naturalized foreign subject and the big men are nationals, trained to the Game from the day they enter the Office. They are educated men, condemned for life to dissociate themselves from the land of their birth, and who they are, or where they live, is known only to three men, two of whom have no official existence.

Sir John liked Schiller and did many things for him. He told him stories of his past adventures and Schiller listened attentively. In the course of one of these post-prandial discussions (he was a most pre-

sentable young man, and Sir John frequently took him home to dinner), Schiller casually mentioned Code No. 2. He spoke of it with easy familiarity, and Sir John discussed the Code in general terms. He told his guest how it was kept in the special safe, how it was made up on the loose-leaf system, and how it was a nuisance because it was always in disorder because he had to consult it every day, and invariably replaced the sheets he had been using on the top, irrespective of their alphabetical right to that position.

The young man had innocently suggested that he should come to Sir John's office every night and sort them out, but the old man smiled benevolently and had said he thought not.

Bland summoned Grigsby to his office one day, and that florid young man came to the tick of the clock.

"This fellow Schiller is bothering me," said Bland in the low tones which are almost second nature in the Service. "He is a smart fellow and very useful, but I mistrust him."

"He has a blameless record," said the other, staring out of the window, "and he knows little of the bigger things—Sir John is a ditherer, but he's close enough. What is worrying you now?"

Bland strode up and down the room.

"He is inventing a new wireless receiver," he said, "and he has got the old man interested. He works all day at it in his room, and at night he carries it down to Sir John's office, where it is most religiously locked in the safe."

"Of course, it is absurd to imagine that the box—it is about the size of a biscuit-tin—can contain anything with human intelligence and get out in an air-tight safe and walk around, or go squinting at the code; but, somehow, I don't like it."

Grigsby chuckled.

"It's a new one on me," he confessed. "I'm not denying that Schiller isn't clever; he invented a draught excluder for my room which is a model of ingenuity, but I can hardly imagine a wireless receiver which reads and transmits a code from the interior of a steel safe."

But Bland was not convinced.

He sent for May Prince. She was holiday-making in Devonshire, but came at once to town: a straight slip of a girl—she looked eighteen, though in truth she was ten years older—with the loveliest smile in the world, a pair of appraising gray eyes, and a mouth which, in repose, was a little inclined to droop.

"Sorry to disturb you on your holiday," said Bland, "but I want Schiller kept under observation. Next week you will be discharged from the Department for neglect of duty. You will retire with a grievance, and you will tell Schiller, whom you will continue to meet, that I am

a beast and that I lose a great deal of money backing racehorses. I will have a few bookmakers' accounts prepared for you, which you will show discreetly."

"Is he to blackmail you?" she asked.

Bland shook his head.

"If he is all I think he is, he will not. No, he might give you confidence for confidence—so long."

And May, with a nod, went out.

Schiller's invention took an unconscionable time to develop. Yet he was enthusiastic over its possibilities and inspired the Chief with some of his enthusiasm. He worked in his spare time at the machine, and regularly every evening at five minutes to six he would carry his heavy box to the Chief's office, solemnly deposit his burden on the iron grill which formed the one shelf of the safe, and watch the locking up with a jealous eye.

And May Prince had nothing to report. Three days before that fatal 1st of August which brought so much destruction and misery to Europe, Bland, who had been working day and night in the interest of his department, went up to Schiller's room to question him regarding the *bona fides* of a certain Antonio Malatesta, suspected of being an agent of the Central Powers. Bland very seldom visited the offices of his subordinates, but on this occasion his 'phone was out of order.

He found the door locked and knocked impatiently. Presently it was opened by the smiling Schiller. The table was covered with a litter of wire, electric batteries, tools, and screws, but of the great wireless receiver there was no sign.

"You are looking for my wonder-box, sir?" said Schiller. "She is in my safe—soon I will give you the most remarkable demonstration! Even today I caught a signal from the Admiralty—through a closed window."

Bland was not listening.

He stood erect, his nose in the air, sniffing.

There was a faint, sweetish smell—a scent of camphor and something else. Schiller watched him through narrowed eyes.

"H'm," said Bland, and turning on his heel, left the room.

A telegram lay on the table. It had been delivered in his brief absence:

"Schiller is agent in Central European pay. He is head of cryptogram department. Have proof.—MAY."

Bland pulled open the drawer of his desk, took out an automatic pistol, and raced through the door, and took the stairs two at a time.

Schiller's door was open, but he had gone.

He had not passed out through the lobby or the front entrance of

the building, but a commissionaire on duty at the side door had seen him pass and had heard him hail a cab.

Bland went back to his office and put through a 'phone call to the police:

"Watch all railway stations and docks. Arrest and detain Augustus Schiller."

He described him briefly, but with a sure touch.

"It is very lamentable," said Sir John, really troubled, "but I can't think he has taken away anything of importance. Has he removed his invention?"

"I have that all right, Sir John," said Bland grimly, "and tonight with your permission I am going to see what happens."

"But surely you don't think—?"

Bland nodded.

"I haven't monkeyed with it at all, but I've listened very carefully through a microphone and there is no doubt that it contains a clock-work mechanism. It is almost silent, but I have detected the sound. I suggest that we place the box where it is usually put, leave the safe door open, and watch."

Sir John frowned. All this seemed a reflection on his judgment and, as such, was to be resented, but he was too loyal a man in the Service to which he had given forty-five years of his life to allow his injured vanity to come before his public duty.

At six o'clock the box was placed in the safe.

"Is that where it was always put?" asked Bland.

"I generally—in fact invariably—put it on the iron grid."

"Just above Code 2, I see, sir."

The Chief Secretary frowned again, but this time in an effort of thought.

"That is true," he said slowly; "once, I remember, when the box was placed a little to one side Schiller pushed it to the center, which I thought was a little impertinent of him."

The two men drew up a couple of armchairs and seated themselves before the safe.

Their vigil promised to be a long one.

Eight, nine, ten o'clock passed, and nothing happened.

"I think it is rather ridiculous, don't you?" asked Sir John testily, as the quarter to eleven chimed.

"It seems so," said Bland doggedly, "but I want to see—good God—look!"

Sir John gasped.

Immediately beneath the box was Code 2, enclosed in a leather binder, the edges of which were bound, for durability sake, with a thin ribbon of steel.

Now, slowly the cover of the book was rising. It jerked up a little then fell, leapt again and fell back, as though there were something inside which was struggling to get free. Then of a sudden the cover opened and remained stiffly erect, forming, with the contents, the letter L, the upright of which was the cover.

There was a "click," and the interior of the safe was illuminated with a soft greenish radiance. It threw a glow upon the top page of the code which lasted for nearly a minute. Then it died away and the cover of the book fell.

"Phew!" whistled Bland.

He lifted the black box carefully from the safe and carried it to Sir John's desk, examined the bottom of the box with a long and patient scrutiny, then set it down.

"Code No. 2 is in the hands of the enemy, sir," he said.

It was daylight when he finished his investigations. Half the box was taken up by accumulators. They supplied the current which, operating through a powerful magnet, lifted the cover of the Code-book. They gave the light to the wonderful little mercurial-vapor lamps, which afforded the concealed camera just enough light to make an effective exposure.

"The little clockwork arrangement is, of course, simple," said Bland, "that sets the time for the machine to work and switches the current on and off. It probably opens and closes the shutters which hide the lens and the lamp and the magnet. I suspected the camera when I smelt the film in his room."

Sir John, white and haggard, nodded.

"Get me out of this as well as you can, Bland," he said gruffly. "I'll retire at the end of the year. I'm a damned old man."

He walked to the door and paused with his fingers on the handle.

"There are thirty men's lives in Schiller's keeping," he said; "their names and addresses are in that book. I suppose he got through the book. I am so careless that I changed the order of the pages almost every day, and the devil has been at work for nine months. He ought to have worked through the book by now, for there was a different sheet on top every time."

"I'll do my best, sir," said Bland.

Schiller was away—and safely away—before war was declared. He was seen in Holland and was traced to Cologne. There was no possibility of changing the code, and messages were already coming through from agents.

Bland took a bold step. Through a man in Denmark he got into communication with Schiller and offered to make a deal. But Schiller was not selling. In the telegraphed words of the emissary whom Bland had sent:

"Schiller is receiving an enormous fee from enemy government for decoding wireless messages that your agents are sending. He alone knows the code."

Nothing daunted, Bland again got into communication with the traitor, offering him an enormous sum if he would consent to return to a neutral country and retain his secret.

"Meet me in Holland, and I will fix everything," his message ended. It elicited a reply which was characteristic of the ingenious master-spy:

"Come into Belgium and I will arrange."

A mad suggestion, for Belgium was now enemy ground, but Bland took his life in his hands, and a long glass dagger in his handbag, and left the same night for the Continent.

Bland went into Belgium by the back door and made a laborious way to Brussels. It would not be in the national interest to explain the means and methods he employed to make his entry into that carefully guarded land, but it is sufficient to say that he met Schiller, looking very prosperous, in the *estaminet* of the Gold Lion at Hazbrulle, a small village on the Ghent-Lille Road.

"You are a very brave man, Mr. Bland," complimented Schiller, "and I wish I could oblige you in what you wish. Unfortunately, I cannot."

"Then why did you bring me here?" asked Bland.

The other looked at him curiously.

"I have a certain code," he said quietly. "I have it complete with certain exceptions: there are three pages missing. What do you want for them?"

Here was a staggerer for a smaller man than Bland.

"That is a fair offer," he said, calmness itself, "but what is the particular code you are buying?"

"No. 2," said the other, "I thought—"

Bland interrupted him.

"No. 2 Code?" he said, sipping his bock (he was for the time being a Belgian peasant). "Of course, that's rubbish. Neither you nor I know No. 2 Code; the code you stole was No. 3."

Schiller smiled superiorly.

"When you get back to London," he said, "ask your Chief whether 'Agate' does not mean 'Transports loading at Borkum.'"

"You might have got hold of that particular word by accident," said Bland grudgingly.

"Ask him if 'Optique' does not mean 'Emperor has gone to Dresden,'" persisted the calm Schiller.

Bland looked round the room thoughtfully.

"You know a great deal, my friend," he said.

The woman who managed the estaminet came in a little later and found Bland pulling slowly at a rank cigar, his elbows on the table, a half emptied bock before him.

The woman glanced with a little smile at Schiller.

"He's tired," said Bland, emptying the bock. "Let him sleep on. And don't let the flies disturb him," he added humorously.

Schiller lay sideways on the bench at which Bland was sitting, his face to the wall, and over his head was a coarse blue handkerchief.

"He will not be disturbed," said Madame, and pocketed the five-sou tip that Bland gave her with a grateful smirk.

"When he wakes," said Bland at the door, "tell him I have gone on to Ghent."

Three hours later a German landsturm soldier who had come for his evening coffee, whisked away the handkerchief which covered the sleeper's face, and stammered:

"Gott!"

For Schiller was dead, and had been dead for three hours. It took even the doctor quite a long time to discover the blade of the glass dagger in his heart.

A week after this Bland was dressing for dinner in his West End flat, and had reached the patience stage of bow-tying, when his valet informed him that Grigsby had called.

"I told him you were dressing, sir," said Taylor, "but Mr. Grigsby is that full of his horse winning the Gatwick steeplechase that he won't take 'No' for an answer."

Taylor was a privileged person, and was permitted to be critical even of Bland's friends. Taylor was an ideal servant from his master's point of view, being simple and garrulous. To a man in Bland's profession garrulity in a servant was a virtue because it kept the employer always on his guard, never allowed him the delusion of safety or the luxury of indiscretion. Moreover, one knew what a garrulous servant was thinking and, through the medium of secret agents, what he was saying.

"Show him up here," said Bland after a while.

Mr. Grigsby came noisily into the dressing-room, though his greeting of Bland was a little cold.

"I've a bone to pick with you," he said. "What the devil have you been saying to Lady Greenholm about me? You know my feelings about Alice—"

"Wait a moment, please," said Bland sharply, and turned to his servant. "Taylor, you can go to the General Post Office with the letter you will find on the hall-stand."

Mr. Grigsby waited until he heard the door of the flat close, then walked into the passage and shot the bolt of the front door.

He came back to where Bland was standing with his back to the fire, his hands thrust into his trouser pockets.

"You're sure he had No. 2?" he asked.

Bland nodded.

Grigsby bit his lip thoughtfully.

"It isn't worth while worrying about how he got it—now," he said.

"The question is, who will get it next?"

Bland opened a cigar case, bit off the end of a cigar, and lit up before he replied.

"What news have you at this end?" he asked. "I was across the border before they discovered his death; naturally, I have heard nothing save what our Amsterdam man told me."

"The code is in London," said Grigsby briefly. "As soon as he was dead a cablegram was sent to Valparaiso by the authorities in Brussels. It was addressed to a man named Van Hooch—probably a third party. Here it is—"

He took out a pocket-book and laid a slip of paper on the table. The message was short and was in Spanish:

"Schiller's London Lodging."

"It's rather puzzling," said Bland. "Schiller wouldn't have written the code out—he was too clever for that. And yet he must have given the authorities a guarantee that the secret should not be lost with his death. It has probably been arranged that he should tell some person agreed upon—in this case a man in South America—in what manner the code was hidden. The exact *locale* he left until his death, probably sealed up amongst his private papers."

"That is a sound theory," said Grigsby. "He told you nothing more—?"

Bland shook his head.

"I had to kill him of course," he said with a note of regret. "It was pretty beastly, but the lives of thirty good men were in his holding. He probably knew where they were stationed."

"And the man that comes after will also know," said the other grimly. "We start tonight to make a very scientific search of his lodgings."

But the flat in Soho Square yielded no profit.

For the greater part of a fortnight three of the smartest Intelligence men (including Lecomte from the French department) probed and searched, slitting furniture, pulling up floors, and dismantling cupboards.

And the result was a negative one.

"I'll swear it is there," said Bland dejectedly. "We've overlooked something. Where is May Prince?"

"She's at the Chief Censor's. She has an office there," explained Grigsby.

"Ask her to come over."

May came in some triumph.

"I thought you'd send for me," she said. "I could have saved you such a lot of trouble!"

Bland was all apologies.

"I've neglected you terribly, May," he said. "Do you know, I have never seen you since you sent me the wire about Schiller?"

She nodded.

"I know that—Schiller is dead, isn't he?"

"How did you know?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"One reads things in the Censor's office—innocent letters from Holland, with messages written between the lines in formic acid and milk which becomes quite visible if you use the correct formulae. Mr. Schiller was a remarkable man; and his father was one of the greatest scholars Switzerland has produced, though he was blind. What do you want of me now?"

Bland explained briefly. The girl knew of Code No. 2 and the secrecy which surrounded it, and realized the urgency of the situation.

"By the way, how did you know that he was an enemy agent?" he asked.

"I discovered his code," she replied cryptically.

Accompanied by the two men she went to the flat in Soho Square. The flooring had been replaced and the rooms were habitable again. She made a tour through the flat, then she returned to the big dining-room.

"This is the room where the code is," she said decisively.

It was a cheerful apartment, papered in a rich brown. A broad dado of a simple design belted the walls, and the wainscoting had been painted a chocolate color to harmonize with the paper. From the ceiling hung an electric fitting, and at this May glanced.

"We've had that down," said Bland, "and the wainscot has been taken out, but we've found nothing."

"Will you leave me alone here for a few minutes?" asked the girl.

The two men withdrew, but they were hardly out of the room before she followed, her eyes blazing with the joy of discovery.

"Got it!" she laughed. "Oh, I knew—I knew!"

"Where is it?" demanded the astonished Bland.

"Wait," she said eagerly. "When do you expect your South American visitor?"

"Tomorrow—of course, the room will be guarded and he will have no chance of searching."

Her eyes were still dancing when she nodded.

"We shall see—tomorrow. I fancy you will have a very frank visitor from Valparaiso, and when he comes I want you to send for me."

"What on earth—"

"Wait, wait, please! What will he say?" She closed her eyes and frowned. "I can tell you his name; it is Raymond Viztelli—"

"You knew this all along?" asked the astonished Grigsby, but she shook her head.

"I knew it when I went into the room," she said, "but now I am guessing. I think he will offer to help you discover the code, and he will tell you there is a secret panel in the wall, and that it will take days and days to make the discovery. And I think he will ask you to be present when he makes his search."

"He needn't ask you that," said Bland unpleasantly.

"I think you're very mysterious, May, but I've a kind of feeling that you're right."

She had a few questions to ask the janitor of the building before she left.

"Mr. Schiller did all his own decorations—in the dining-room, didn't he?"

"Yes, miss," said the man. "A regular feller he was for potterin' about with a paste-pot or a paint-brush."

"And he has paid his rent in advance?"

"That's right, Miss."

"And he said that nothing was to be done to the flat till he came back?"

"His very words!" said the caretaker.

"I thought so," said May.

At ten o'clock next morning a card was brought to Bland. It was inscribed:

"Señor X. Bertramo Silva,"

and written in a corner, "of Valparaiso."

Bland pressed a bell, and in a little time Grigsby and the girl came in.

"He's come," said Bland shortly, and handed her the card.

The visitor was shown in. He was a dapper little man with a pointed beard, and spoke excellent English. Moreover, after the preliminaries he plunged straight into the heart of his subject.

"I am going to be very frank with you, Mr. Bland," he began; and Bland shooting a swift glance at the girl, saw the laughter in her eyes.

"I was for some time an agent of the Central Powers—I tell you this because I wish you to clearly understand my position," he went on.

"Safe in South America, I thought no call would be made upon my

services. A few weeks ago, however, I received a cablegram which was intercepted by the British authorities.

"I had known, of course, that in certain eventualities I might be obliged to come to England to make a search for certain documents, and that I should learn the place where they were hidden by telegram. That telegram came—I am here!"

He flung his arms dramatically.

"I came straight to you on my arrival. I tell you frankly why I came, because I decided, the night before I reached Plymouth, that the game was not worth the candle. I will assist you as far as possible to discover the documents, and then I will, if you will allow me, return to South America."

It was all very amazing to Bland. The man had said almost all that May had predicted he would say. He looked at the girl again, and she nodded.

"You understand that your search—" began Bland.

"Will be under the eyes of the police?" interrupted the man from Valparaiso. "I would prefer it."

"You would like to start your search at once, I suppose?" asked Bland.

"The sooner the better," said the other heartily.

"One moment."

It was the girl who spoke.

"You have a very good memory, *señor*?" she asked.

For just a fraction of a second the smile died from the man's eyes.

"I have an excellent memory, madame," he said curtly.

They went together in a cab and were admitted to Schiller's flat by the police officer on guard.

"Have you any theory?" asked Bland as they stood in the hall.

"Yes," replied the other quickly. "I think the documents are hidden in a recess in the wall behind a secret panel. It may take a week to find the panel. This is a very old house, and it is possible Mr. Schiller chose it for some structural advantage it may have had."

Again Bland thought rapidly—the frankness of the man, his willingness to help—the talk of secret panels was all in accordance with the girl's amazing prophecy.

He saw the glee in her eyes—glee at the mystification of her Chief.

Then he turned to the little man.

"Go ahead," he said.

Señor Silva bowed.

"I will take this wall first," he said, "and I will search for the evidence of a panel. My fingers are perhaps more sensitive than yours—"

His hand was outstretched toward the dado, when—

"Stop!"

At the sound of the girl's sharp warning Señor Silva turned.

"Before you go any farther," she said, "let me ask you if you value your life?"

The Chilean shrugged and spread his hands.

"Naturally, madame."

The girl turned to Bland.

"If this man learns Code 2, what will happen to him?"

"He will certainly die," said Bland simply.

She nodded.

"You may go on if you wish, but you are starting a little too far to the right."

"To the right—!" he stammered, his face going ghastly gray.

"The message to you begins at the door, Señor Viztelli," she said calmly. "The code does not begin until you reach the window. Will you continue?"

He shook his head, having no words.

Bland called in his men and they hustled the little South American into a cab.

"And now explain," said Bland.

The girl walked to the wall near the door and touched the dado.

"Feel," she said.

Bland's fingers touched the wallpaper gingerly. He felt a few pinpoint eruptions, passed his hand to the right, and felt more. Then the truth dawned on him.

"Braille!" he whispered. The girl nodded.

"Schiller's father was a blind man," she said, "and Schiller evidently took up the study of the alphabet by which blind men read. Silva was informed how the code had been written and learnt it against the time when it would be necessary to take over Schiller's work."

She ran her fingers along the dado.

"There are seven lines of writing, and they run round the room," she said. "Schiller pasted this dado on himself—a bit at a time—as fast as he was able to photograph Code 2. This is how the top line begins.

"To Raymond Viztelli," she read. "Keep up pretense helping police; be frank, as I have told you. Tell them there is a secret panel, and you will be able to come often. Code begins: 'Abraham' means 'New guns have been fitted—'"

Bland caught her hand and gently drew it away.

"If you want to be a nice live girl and dine with me tonight," he said half humorously, "do not pursue your investigations any farther."

JOSEPH CONRAD

Born in 1857, in what was then Russian Poland, until 1889 Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski had written nothing, and when at length he did set pen to paper, it was to write in a language not his own. When he died, universally mourned, in 1924, the name and fame of "Joseph Conrad" had circled the globe, and English literature had been enriched by a dozen masterpieces. A sailor, he wrote largely about the sea and the strange lands bordering the sea, and he has left us some of the best stories ever told. Yet he wrote, it has been said, from a tormented inner compulsion and with great pain; almost every word was for him an agony. It was a huge pleasure to find a short story by Joseph Conrad that would fit into the scheme of this book. The Informer is not perhaps one of its author's best tales; but except for a long novel, *The Secret Agent*, which you will want to read, I think it is his best spy story. The spies in it are anarchists, so-called, but there is a police spy whose unmasking will grip your attention. In a subtitle, as the story usually is printed, Conrad called this "a desperate tale;" but I think there was a twinkle in his eye when he wrote that.

THE INFORMER

MR. X CAME TO ME, preceded by a letter of introduction from a good friend of mine in Paris, specifically to see my collection of Chinese bronzes and porcelain.

My friend in Paris is a collector, too. He collects neither porcelain, nor bronzes, nor pictures, nor medals, nor stamps, nor anything that could be profitably dispersed under an auctioneer's hammer. He would reject, with genuine surprise, the name of a collector. Nevertheless, that's what he is by temperament. He collects acquaintances. It is delicate work. He brings to it the patience, the passion, the determination of a true collector of curiosities. His collection does not contain any royal personages. I don't think he considers them sufficiently rare and interesting; but, with that exception, he has met with and talked to everyone worth knowing on any conceivable ground. He observes them, listens to them, penetrates them, measures them, and puts the memory away in the galleries of his mind. He has schemed, plotted, and travelled all over Europe in order to add to his collection of distinguished personal acquaintances.

As he is wealthy, well connected, and unprejudiced, his collection is pretty complete, including objects (or should I say subjects?) whose

value is unappreciated by the vulgar, and often unknown to popular fame. Of those specimens my friend is naturally the most proud.

He wrote to me of X: "He is the greatest rebel (*révolté*) of modern times. The world knows him as a revolutionary writer whose savage irony has laid bare the rottenness of the most respectable institutions. He has scalped every venerated head, and has mangled at the stake of his wit every received opinion and every recognized principle of conduct and policy. Who does not remember his flaming red revolutionary pamphlets? Their sudden swarmings used to overwhelm the powers of every Continental police like a plague of crimson gadflies. But this extreme writer has been also the active inspirer of secret societies, the mysterious unknown Number One of desperate conspiracies suspected and unsuspected, matured or baffled. And the world at large has never had an inkling of that fact! This accounts for him going about amongst us to this day, a veteran of many subterranean campaigns, standing aside now, safe within his reputation of merely the greatest destructive publicist that ever lived."

Thus wrote my friend, adding that Mr. X was an enlightened connoisseur of bronzes and china, and asking me to show him my collection.

X turned up in due course. My treasures are disposed in three large rooms without carpets and curtains. There is no other furniture than the *étagères* and the glass cases whose contents shall be worth a fortune to my heirs. I allow no fires to be lighted, for fear of accidents, and a fire-proof door separates them from the rest of the house.

It was a bitter cold day. We kept on our overcoats and hats. Middle-sized and spare, his eyes alert in a long, Roman-nosed countenance, X walked on his neat little feet, with short steps, and looked at my collection intelligently. I hope I looked at him intelligently, too. A snow-white moustache and imperial made his nut-brown complexion appear darker than it really was. In his fur coat and shiny tall hat that terrible man looked fashionable. I believe he belonged to a noble family, and could have called himself Vicomte X de la Z if he chose. We talked nothing but bronzes and porcelain. He was remarkably appreciative. We parted on cordial terms.

Where he was staying I don't know. I imagine he must have been a lonely man. Anarchists, I suppose, have no families—not, at any rate, as we understand that social relation. Organization into families may answer to a need of human nature, but in the last instance it is based on law, and therefore must be something odious and impossible to an anarchist. But, indeed, I don't understand anarchists. Does a man of that—of that—persuasion still remain an anarchist when alone, quite alone and going to bed, for instance? Does he lay his head on the pillow, pull his bedclothes over him, and go to sleep with the necessity

of the *chambardement général*, as the French slang has it, of the general blow-up, always present to his mind? And if so how can he? I am sure that if such a faith (or such a fanaticism) once mastered my thoughts I would never be able to compose myself sufficiently to sleep or eat or perform any of the routine acts of daily life. I would want no wife, no children; I could have no friends, it seems to me; and as to collecting bronzes or china, that, I should say, would be quite out of the question. But I don't know. All I know is that Mr. X took his meals in a very good restaurant which I frequented also.

With his head uncovered, the silver top-knot of his brushed-up hair completed the character of his physiognomy, all bony ridges and sunken hollows, clothed in a perfect impassiveness of expression. His meagre brown hands emerging from large white cuffs came and went breaking bread, pouring wine, and so on, with quiet mechanical precision. His head and body above the tablecloth had a rigid immobility. This fire-brand, this great agitator, exhibited the least possible amount of warmth and animation. His voice was rasping, cold, and monotonous in a low key. He could not be called a talkative personality; but with his detached calm manner he appeared as ready to keep the conversation going as to drop it at any moment.

And his conversation was by no means commonplace. To me, I own, there was some excitement in talking quietly across a dinner-table with a man whose venomous pen-stabs had sapped the vitality of at least one monarchy. That much was a matter of public knowledge. But I knew more. I knew of him—from my friend—as a certainty what the guardians of social order in Europe had at most only suspected, or dimly guessed at.

He had had what I may call his underground life. And as I sat, evening after evening, facing him at dinner, a curiosity in that direction would naturally arise in my mind. I am a quiet and peaceable product of civilization, and know no passion other than the passion for collecting things which are rare, and must remain exquisite even if approaching to the monstrous. Some Chinese bronzes are monstrously precious. And here (out of my friend's collection), here I had before me a kind of rare monster. It is true that this monster was polished and in a sense even exquisite. His beautiful unruffled manner was that. But then he was not of bronze. He was not even Chinese, which would have enabled one to contemplate him calmly across the gulf of racial difference. He was alive and European; he had the manner of good society, wore a coat and hat like mine, and had pretty near the same taste in cooking. It was too frightful to think of.

One evening he remarked, casually, in the course of conversation, "There's no amendment to be got out of mankind except by terror and violence."

You can imagine the effect of such a phrase out of such a man's mouth upon a person like myself, whose whole scheme of life had been based upon a suave and delicate discrimination of social and artistic values. Just imagine! Upon me, to whom all sorts and forms of violence appeared as unreal as the giants, ogres, and seven-headed hydras whose activities affect, fantastically, the course of legends and fairy-tales!

I seemed suddenly to hear above the festive bustle and clatter of the brilliant restaurant the mutter of a hungry and seditious multitude.

I suppose I am impressionable and imaginative. I had a disturbing vision of darkness, full of lean jaws and wild eyes, amongst the hundred electric lights of the place. But somehow this vision made me angry, too. The sight of that man, so calm, breaking bits of white bread, exasperated me. And I had the audacity to ask him how it was that the starving proletariat of Europe to whom he had been preaching revolt and violence had not been made indignant by his openly luxurious life. "At all this," I said, pointedly, with a glance round the room and at the bottle of champagne we generally shared between us at dinner.

He remained unmoved.

"Do I feed on their toil and their heart's blood? Am I a speculator or a capitalist? Did I steal my fortune from a starving people? No! They know this very well. And they envy me nothing. The miserable mass of the people is generous to its leaders. What I have acquired has come to me through my writings; not from the millions of pamphlets distributed gratis to the hungry and the oppressed, but from the hundreds of thousands of copies sold to the well-fed bourgeoisie. You know that my writings were at one time the rage, the fashion—the thing to read with wonder and horror, to turn your eyes up at my pathos . . . or else, to laugh in ecstasies at my wit."

"Yes," I admitted. "I remember, of course; and I confess frankly that I could never understand that infatuation."

"Don't you know yet," he said, "that an idle and selfish class loves to see mischief being made, even if it is made at its own expense? Its own life being all a matter of pose and gesture, it is unable to realize the power and the danger of a real movement and of words that have no sham meaning. It is all fun and sentiment. It is sufficient, for instance, to point out the attitude of the old French aristocracy towards the philosophers whose words were preparing the Great Revolution. Even in England, where you have some common-sense, a demagogue has only to shout loud enough and long enough to find some backing in the very class he is shouting at. You, too, like to see mischief being made. The demagogue carries the amateurs of emotion with him. Amateurism in this, that, and the other thing is a delightfully easy way of killing time, and feeding one's own vanity—the silly vanity of being abreast with the ideas of the day after to-morrow. Just as good and otherwise

harmless people will join you in ecstasies over your collection without having the slightest notion in what its marvellousness really consists."

I hung my head. It was a crushing illustration of the sad truth he advanced. The world is full of such people. And that instance of the French aristocracy before the Revolution was extremely telling, too. I could not traverse his statement, though its cynicism—always a distasteful trait—took off much of its value to my mind. However, I admit I was impressed. I felt the need to say something which would not be in the nature of assent and yet would not invite discussion.

"You don't mean to say," I observed, airily, "that extreme revolutionists have ever been actively assisted by the infatuation of such people?"

"I did not mean exactly that by what I said just now. I generalized. But since you ask me, I may tell you that such help has been given to revolutionary activities, more or less consciously, in various countries. And even in this country."

"Impossible!" I protested with firmness. "We don't play with fire to that extent."

"And yet you can better afford it than others, perhaps. But let me observe that most women, if not always ready to play with fire, are generally eager to play with a loose spark or so."

"Is this a joke?" I asked, smiling.

"If it is, I am not aware of it," he said, woodenly. "I was thinking of an instance. Oh! mild enough in a way . . ."

I became all expectation at this. I had tried many times to approach him on his underground side, so to speak. The very word had been pronounced between us. But he had always met me with his impenetrable calm.

"And at the same time," Mr. X continued, "it will give you a notion of the difficulties that may arise in what you are pleased to call underground work. It is sometimes difficult to deal with them. Of course there is no hierarchy amongst the affiliated. No rigid system."

My surprise was great, but short-lived. Clearly, amongst extreme anarchists there could be no hierarchy; nothing in the nature of a law of precedence. The idea of anarchy ruling among anarchists was comforting, too. It could not possibly make for efficiency.

Mr. X startled me by asking, abruptly, "You know Hermione Street?"

I nodded doubtful assent. Hermione Street has been, within the last three years, improved out of any man's knowledge. The name exists still, but not one brick or stone of the old Hermione Street is left now. It was the old street he meant, for he said:

"There was a row of two-storied brick houses on the left, with their backs against the wing of a great public building—you remember. Would it surprise you very much to hear that one of these houses was

for a time the centre of anarchist propaganda and of what you would call underground action?"

"Not at all," I declared. Hermione Street had never been particularly respectable, as I remembered it.

"The house was the property of a distinguished government official," he added, sipping his champagne.

"Oh, indeed!" I said, this time not believing a word of it.

"Of course he was not living there," Mr. X continued. "But from ten till four he sat next door to it, the dear man, in his well-appointed private room in the wing of the public building I've mentioned. To be strictly accurate, I must explain that the house in Hermione Street did not really belong to him. It belonged to his grown-up children—a daughter and a son. The girl, a fine figure, was by no means vulgarly pretty. To more personal charm than mere youth could account for, she added the seductive appearance of enthusiasm, of independence, of courageous thought. I suppose she put on these appearances as she put on her picturesque dresses and for the same reason: to assert her individuality at any cost. You know, women would go to any length almost for such a purpose. She went to a great length. She had acquired all the appropriate gestures of revolutionary convictions—the gestures of pity, of anger, of indignation against the anti-humanitarian vices of the social class to which she belonged herself. All this sat on her striking personality as well as her slightly original costumes. Very slightly original; just enough to mark a protest against the philistinism of the overfed taskmasters of the poor. Just enough, and no more. It would not have done to go too far in that direction—you understand. But she was of age, and nothing stood in the way of her offering her house to the revolutionary workers."

"You don't mean it!" I cried.

"I assure you," he affirmed, "that she made that very practical gesture. How else could they have got hold of it? The cause is not rich. And, moreover, there would have been difficulties with any ordinary house-agent, who would have wanted references and so on. The group she came in contact with while exploring the poor quarters of the town (you know the gesture of charity and personal service which was so fashionable some years ago) accepted with gratitude. The first advantage was that Hermione Street is, as you know, well away from the suspect part of the town, specially watched by the police.

"The ground floor consisted of a little Italian restaurant, of the fly-blown sort. There was no difficulty in buying the proprietor out. A woman and a man belonging to the group took it on. The man had been a cook. The comrades could get their meals there, unnoticed amongst the other customers. This was another advantage. The first floor was occupied by a shabby Variety Artists' Agency—an agency for

performers in inferior music-halls, you know. A fellow called Bomm, I remember. He was not disturbed. It was rather favourable than otherwise to have a lot of foreign-looking people, jugglers, acrobats, singers of both sexes, and so on, going in and out all day long. The police paid no attention to new faces, you see. The top floor happened, most conveniently, to stand empty then."

X interrupted himself to attack impassively, with measured movements, a *bombe glacée* which the waiter had just set down on the table. He swallowed carefully a few spoonfuls of the iced sweet, and asked me, "Did you ever hear of Stone's Dried Soup?"

"Hear of what?"

"It was," X pursued, evenly, "a comestible article once rather prominently advertised in the dailies, but which never, somehow, gained the favour of the public. The enterprise fizzled out, as you say here. Parcels of their stock could be picked up at auctions at considerably less than a penny a pound. The group bought some of it, and an agency for Stone's Dried Soup was started on the top floor. A perfectly respectable business. The stuff, a yellow powder of extremely unappealing aspect, was put up in large square tins, of which six went to a case. If anybody ever came to give an order, it was, of course, executed. But the advantage of the powder was this, that things could be concealed in it very conveniently. Now and then a special case got put on a van and sent off to be exported abroad under the very nose of the policeman on duty at the corner. You understand?"

"I think I do," I said, with an expressive nod at the remnants of the *bombe* melting slowly in the dish.

"Exactly. But the cases were useful in another way, too. In the basement, or in the cellar at the back, rather, two printing-presses were established. A lot of revolutionary literature of the most inflammatory kind was got away from the house in Stone's Dried Soup cases. The brother of our anarchist young lady found some occupation there. He wrote articles, helped to set up type and pull off the sheets, and generally assisted the man in charge, a very able young fellow called Sevrin.

"The guiding spirit of that group was a fanatic of social revolution. He is dead now. He was an engraver and etcher of genius. You must have seen his work. It is much sought after by certain amateurs now. He began by being revolutionary in his art, and ended by becoming a revolutionist, after his wife and child had died in want and misery. He used to say that the bourgeoisie, the smug, overfed lot, had killed them. That was his real belief. He still worked at his art and led a double life. He was tall, gaunt, and swarthy, with a long, brown beard and deep-set eyes. You must have seen him. His name was Horne."

At this I was really startled. Of course years ago I used to meet Horne about. He looked like a powerful, rough gipsy, in an old top hat, with a

red muffler round his throat and buttoned up in a long, shabby overcoat. He talked of his art with exaltation, and gave one the impression of being strung up to the verge of insanity. A small group of connoisseurs appreciated his work. Who would have thought that this man. . . . Amazing! And yet it was not, after all, so difficult to believe.

"As you see," X went on, "this group was in a position to pursue its work of propaganda, and the other kind of work, too, under very advantageous conditions. They were all resolute, experienced men of a superior stamp. And yet we became struck at length by the fact that plans prepared in Hermione Street almost invariably failed."

"Who were 'we'?" I asked, pointedly.

"Some of us in Brussels—at the centre," he said, hastily. "Whatever vigorous action originated in Hermione Street seemed doomed to failure. Something always happened to baffle the best planned manifestations in every part of Europe. It was a time of general activity. You must not imagine that all our failures are of a loud sort, with arrests and trials. That is not so. Often the police work quietly, almost secretly, defeating our combinations by clever counter-plotting. No arrests, no noise, no alarming of the public mind and inflaming the passions. It is a wise procedure. But at that time the police were too uniformly successful from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. It was annoying and began to look dangerous. At last we came to the conclusion that there must be some untrustworthy elements amongst the London groups. And I came over to see what could be done quietly.

"My first step was to call upon our young Lady Amateur of anarchism at her private house. She received me in a flattering way. I judged that she knew nothing of the chemical and other operations going on at the top of the house in Hermione Street. The printing of anarchist literature was the only 'activity' she seemed to be aware of there. She was displaying very strikingly the usual signs of severe enthusiasm, and had already written many sentimental articles with ferocious conclusions. I could see she was enjoying herself hugely, with all the gestures and grimaces of deadly earnestness. They suited her big-eyed, broad-browed face and the good carriage of her shapely head, crowned by a magnificent lot of brown hair done in an unusual and becoming style. Her brother was in the room, too, a serious youth, with arched eyebrows and wearing a red necktie, who struck me as being absolutely in the dark about everything in the world, including himself. By and by a tall young man came in. He was clean-shaved with a strong bluish jaw and something of the air of a taciturn actor or of a fanatical priest: the type with thick black eyebrows—you know. But he was very presentable indeed. He shook hands at once vigorously with each of us. The young lady came up to me and murmured sweetly, 'Comrade Sevrin.'

"I had never seen him before. He had little to say to us, but sat down

by the side of the girl, and they fell at once into earnest conversation. She leaned forward in her deep armchair, and took her nicely rounded chin in her beautiful white hand. He looked attentively into her eyes. It was the attitude of love-making, serious, intense, as if on the brink of the grave. I suppose she felt it necessary to round and complete her assumption of advanced ideas, of revolutionary lawlessness, by making believe to be in love with an anarchist. And this one, I repeat, was extremely presentable, notwithstanding his fanatical black-browed aspect. After a few stolen glances in their direction, I had no doubt that he was in earnest. As to the lady, her gestures were unapproachable, better than the very thing itself in the blended suggestion of dignity, sweetness, condescension, fascination, surrender, and reserve. She interpreted her conception of what that precise sort of love-making should be with consummate art. And so far, she, too, no doubt, was in earnest. Gestures—but so perfect!

"After I had been left alone with our Lady Amateur I informed her guardedly of the object of my visit. I hinted at our suspicions. I wanted to hear what she would have to say, and half expected some perhaps unconscious revelation. All she said was, 'That's serious,' looking delightfully concerned and grave. But there was a sparkle in her eyes which meant plainly, 'How exciting!' After all, she knew little of anything except of words. Still, she undertook to put me in communication with Horne, who was not easy to find unless in Hermione Street, where I did not wish to show myself just them.

"I met Horne. This was another kind of a fanatic altogether. I exposed to him the conclusion we in Brussels had arrived at, and pointed out the significant series of failures. To this he answered with irrelevant exaltation:

"'I have something in hand that shall strike terror into the heart of these gorged brutes.'

"And then I learned that, by excavating in one of the cellars of the house, he and some companions had made their way into the vaults under the great public building I have mentioned before. The blowing up of a whole wing was a certainty as soon as the materials were ready.

"I was not so appalled at the stupidity of that move as I might have been had not the usefulness of our centre in Hermione Street become already very problematical. In fact, in my opinion it was much more of a police trap by this time than anything else.

"What was necessary now was to discover what, or rather who, was wrong, and I managed at last to get that idea into Horne's head. He glared, perplexed, his nostrils working as if he were sniffing treachery in the air.

"And here comes a piece of work which will no doubt strike you as a sort of theatrical expedient. And yet what else could have been done?

The problem was to find out the untrustworthy member of the group. But no suspicion could be fastened on one more than another. To set a watch upon them all was not very practicable. Besides, that proceeding often fails. In any case, it takes time, and the danger was pressing. I felt certain that the premises in Hermione Street would be ultimately raided, though the police had evidently such confidence in the informer that the house, for the time being, was not even watched. Horne was positive on that point. Under the circumstances it was an unfavourable symptom. Something had to be done quickly.

"I decided to organize a raid myself upon the group. Do you understand? A raid of other trusty comrades personating the police. A conspiracy within a conspiracy. You see the object of it, of course. When apparently about to be arrested I hoped the informer would betray himself in some way or other; either by some unguarded act or simply by his unconcerned demeanour, for instance. Of course there was the risk of complete failure and the no lesser risk of some fatal accident in the course of resistance, perhaps, or in the efforts at escape. For, as you will easily see, the Hermione Street group had to be actually and completely taken unawares, as I was sure they would be by the real police before very long. The informer was amongst them, and Horne alone could be let into the secret of my plan.

"I will not enter into the detail of my preparations. It was not very easy to arrange, but it was done very well, with a really convincing effect. The sham police invaded the restaurant whose shutters were immediately put up. The surprise was perfect. Most of the Hermione Street party were found in the second cellar, enlarging the hole communicating with the vaults of the great public building. At the first alarm, several comrades bolted through impulsively into the aforesaid vault, where, of course, had this been a genuine raid, they would have been hopelessly trapped. We did not bother about them for the moment. They were harmless enough. The top floor caused considerable anxiety to Horne and myself. There, surrounded by tins of Stone's Dried Soup, a comrade, nick-named the Professor (he was an ex-science student) was engaged in perfecting some new detonators. He was an abstracted, self-confident, sallow little man, armed with large round spectacles, and we were afraid that under a mistaken impression he would blow himself up and wreck the house about our ears. I rushed upstairs and found him already at the door, on the alert, listening, as he said, to 'suspicious noises down below.' Before I had quite finished explaining to him what was going on he shrugged his shoulder disdainfully and turned away to his balances and test-tubes. His was the true spirit of an extreme revolutionist. Explosives were his faith, his hope, his weapon, and his shield. He perished a couple of years after-

wards in a secret laboratory through the premature explosion of one of his improved detonators.

"Hurrying down again, I found an impressive scene in the gloom of the big cellar. The man who personated the inspector (he was no stranger to the part) was speaking harshly, and giving bogus orders to his bogus subordinates for the removal of his prisoners. Evidently nothing enlightening had happened so far. Horne, saturnine and swarthy, waited with folded arms, and his patient, moody expectation had an air of stoicism well in keeping with the situation. I detected in the shadows one of the Hermione Street group surreptitiously chewing up and swallowing a small piece of paper. Some compromising scrap, I suppose; perhaps just a note of a few names and addresses. He was a true and faithful 'companion.' But the fund of secret malice which lurks at the bottom of our sympathies caused me to feel amused at that perfectly uncalled-for performance.

In every other respect the risky experiment, the theatrical coup, if you like to call it so, seemed to have failed. The deception could not be kept up much longer; the explanation would bring about a very embarrassing and even grave situation. The man who had eaten the paper would be furious. The fellows who had bolted away would be angry, too.

"To add to my vexation, the door communicating with the other cellar, where the printing-presses were, flew open, and our young lady revolutionist appeared, a black silhouette in a close-fitting dress and a large hat, with the blaze of gas flaring in there at her back. Over her shoulder I perceived the arched eyebrows and the red necktie of her brother.

"The last people in the world I wanted to see then! They had gone that evening to some amateur concert for the delectation of the poor people, you know; but she had insisted on leaving early, on purpose to call in Hermione Street on the way home, under the pretext of having some work to do. Her usual task was to correct the proofs of the Italian and French editions of the *Alarm Bell* and the *Firebrand*."

"Heavens!" I murmured. I had been shown once a few copies of these publications. Nothing, in my opinion, could have been less fit for the eyes of a young lady. They were the most advanced things of the sort; advanced, I mean, beyond all bounds of reason and decency. One of them preached the dissolution of all social and domestic ties; the other advocated systematic murder. To think of a young girl calmly tracking printers' errors all along the sort of abominable sentences I remembered was intolerable to my sentiment of womanhood. Mr. X, after giving me a glance, pursued steadily.

"I think, however, that she came mostly to exercise her fascinations upon Sevrin, and to receive his homage in her queenly and condescend-

ing way. She was aware of both—her power and his homage—and enjoyed them with, I dare say, complete innocence. We have no ground in expediency or morals to quarrel with her on that account. Charm in woman and exceptional intelligence in man are a law unto themselves. Is it not so?"

I refrained from expressing my abhorrence of that licentious doctrine because of my curiosity.

"But what happened then?" I hastened to ask.

X went on crumbling slowly a small piece of bread with a careless left hand.

"What happened, in effect," he confessed, "is that she saved the situation."

"She gave you an opportunity to end your rather sinister farce," I suggested.

"Yes," he said, preserving his impassive bearing. "The farce was bound to end soon. And it ended in a very few minutes. And it ended well. Had she not come in, it might have ended badly. Her brother, of course, did not count. They had slipped into the house quietly some time before. The printing-cellar had an entrance of its own. Not finding any one there, she sat down to her proofs, expecting Sevrin to return to his work at any moment. He did not do so. She grew impatient, heard through the door the sounds of a disturbance in the other cellar and naturally came into see what was the matter.

Sevrin had been with us. At first he had seemed to me the most amazed of the whole raided lot. He appeared for an instant as if paralyzed with astonishment. He stood rooted to the spot. He never moved a limb. A solitary gas-jet flared near his head; all the other lights had been put out at the first alarm. And presently, from my dark corner, I observed on his shaven actor's face an expression of puzzled, vexed watchfulness. He knitted his heavy eyebrows. The corners of his mouth dropped scornfully. He was angry. Most likely he had seen through the game, and I regretted I had not taken him from the first into my complete confidence.

"But with the appearance of the girl he became obviously alarmed. It was plain. I could see it grow. The change of his expression was swift and startling. And I did not know why. The reason never occurred to me. I was merely astonished at the extreme alteration of the man's face. Of course he had not been aware of her presence in the other cellar; but that did not explain the shock her advent had given him. For a moment he seemed to have been reduced to imbecility. He opened his mouth as if to shout, or perhaps only to gasp. At any rate, it was somebody else who shouted. This somebody else was the heroic comrade whom I had detected swallowing a piece of paper. With laudable presence of mind he let out a warning yell.

"'It's the police! Back! Back! Run back, and bolt the door behind you.'"

"It was an excellent hint; but instead of retreating the girl continued to advance, followed by her long-faced brother in his knickerbocker suit, in which he had been singing comic songs for the entertainment of a joyless proletariat. She advanced not as if she had failed to understand—the word 'police' has an unmistakable sound—but rather as if she could not help herself. She did not advance with the free gait and expanding presence of a distinguished amateur anarchist amongst poor, struggling professionals, but with slightly raised shoulders, and her elbows pressed close to her body, as if trying to shrink within herself. Her eyes were fixed immovably upon Sevrin. Sevrin the man, I fancy; not Sevrin the anarchist. But she advanced. And that was natural. For all their assumption of independence, girls of that class are used to the feeling of being specially protected, as, in fact, they are. This feeling accounts for nine tenths of their audacious gestures. Her face had gone completely colourless. Chastly. Fancy having it brought home to her so brutally that she was the sort of person who must run away from the police! I believe she was pale with indignation, mostly, though there was, of course, also the concern for her intact personality, a vague dread of some sort of rudeness. And, naturally, she turned to a man, to the man on whom she had a claim of fascination and homage—the man who could not conceivably fail her at any juncture."

"But," I cried, amazed at this analysis, "if it had been serious, real, I mean—as she thought it was—what could she expect him to do for her?"

X never moved a muscle of his face.

"Goodness knows. I imagine that this charming, generous, and independent creature had never known in her life a single genuine thought; I mean a single thought detached from small human vanities, or whose source was not in some conventional perception. All I know is that after advancing a few steps she extended her hand towards the motionless Sevrin. And that at least was no gesture. It was a natural movement. As to what she expected him to do, who can tell? The impossible. But whatever she expected, it could not have come up, I am safe to say, to what he had made up his mind to do, even before that entreating hand had appealed to him so directly. It had not been necessary. From the moment he had seen her enter that cellar, he had made up his mind to sacrifice his future usefulness, to throw off the impenetrable, solidly fastened mask it had been his pride to wear——"

"What do you mean?" I interrupted, puzzled. "Was it Sevrin, then, who was——"

"He was. The most persistent, the most dangerous, the craftiest, the most systematic of informers. A genius amongst betrayers. Fortunately for us, he was unique. The man was a fanatic, I have told you. For

tunately, again, for us, he had fallen in love with the accomplished and innocent gestures of that girl. An actor in desperate earnest himself, he must have believed in the absolute value of conventional signs. As to the grossness of the trap into which he fell, the explanation must be that two sentiments of such absorbing magnitude cannot exist simultaneously in one heart. The danger of that other and unconscious comedian robbed him of his vision, of his perspicacity, of his judgment. Indeed, it did at first rob him of his self-possession. But he regained that through the necessity—as it appeared to him imperiously—to do something at once. To do what? Why, to get her out of the house as quickly as possible. He was desperately anxious to do that. I have told you he was terrified. It could not be about himself. He had been surprised and annoyed at a move quite unforeseen and premature. I may even say he had been furious. He was accustomed to arrange the last scene of his betrayals with a deep, subtle art which left his revolutionist reputation untouched. But it seems clear to me that at the same time he had resolved to make the best of it, to keep his mask resolutely on. It was only with the discovery of her being in the house that everything—the forced calm, the restraint of his fanaticism, the mask—all came off together in a kind of panic. Why panic, do you ask? The answer is very simple. He remembered—or, I dare say, he had never forgotten—the Professor alone at the top of the house, pursuing his researches, surrounded by tins upon tins of Stone's Dried Soup. There was enough in some few of them to bury us all where we stood under a heap of bricks. Sevrin, of course, was aware of that. And we must believe, also, that he knew the exact character of the man. He had gauged so many such characters! Or perhaps he only gave the Professor credit for what he himself was capable of. But, in any case, the effect was produced. And suddenly he raised his voice in authority.

"Get the lady away at once."

"It turned out that he was as hoarse as a crow; result, no doubt, of the intense emotion. It passed off in a moment. But these fateful words issued forth from his contracted throat in a discordant, ridiculous croak. They required no answer. The thing was done. However, the man personating the inspector judged it expedient to say roughly:

"She shall go soon enough, together with the rest of you."

"These were the last words belonging to the comedy part of this affair.

"Oblivious of everything and everybody, Sevrin strode towards him and seized the lapels of his coat. Under his thin bluish cheeks one could see his jaws working with passion.

"You have men posted outside. Get the lady taken home at once. Do you hear? Now. Before you try to get hold of the man upstairs."

"'Oh! There is a man upstairs,' scoffed the other, openly. 'Well, he shall be brought down in time to see the end of this.'

"But Sevrin, beside himself, took no heed of the tone.

"'Who's the imbecile meddler who sent you blundering here? Didn't you understand your instructions? Don't you know anything? It's incredible. Here——'

"He dropped the lapels of the coat and, plunging his hand into his breast, jerked feverishly at something under his shirt. At last he produced a small square pocket of soft leather, which must have been hanging like a scapulary from his neck by the tape whose broken ends dangled from his fist.

"'Look inside,' he spluttered, flinging it in the other's face. And instantly he turned round towards the girl. She stood just behind him, perfectly still and silent. Her set, white face gave an illusion of placidity. Only her staring eyes seemed bigger and darker.

"He spoke rapidly, with nervous assurance. I heard him distinctly promise her to make everything as clear as daylight presently. But that was all I caught. He stood close to her, never attempting to touch her even with the tip of his little finger—and she stared at him stupidly. For a moment, however, her eyelids descended slowly, pathetically, and then, with the long black eyelashes lying on her white cheeks, she looked ready to fall down in a swoon. But she never even swayed where she stood. He urged her loudly to follow him at once, and walked towards the door at the bottom of the cellar stairs without looking behind him. And, as a matter of fact, she did move after him a pace or two. But, of course, he was not allowed to reach the door. There were angry exclamations, a short, fierce scuffle. Flung away violently, he came flying backwards upon her, and fell. She threw out her arms in a gesture of dismay and stepped aside, just clear of his head, which struck the ground heavily near her shoe.

"He grunted with the shock. By the time he had picked himself up, slowly, dazedly, he was awake to the reality of things. The man into whose hands he had thrust the leather case had extracted therefrom a narrow strip of bluish paper. He held it up above his head, and, as after the scuffle an expectant uneasy stillness reigned once more, he threw it down disdainfully with the words, 'I think, comrades, that this proof was hardly necessary.'

"Quick as thought, the girl stooped after the fluttering slip. Holding it spread out in both hands, she looked at it; then, without raising her eyes, opened her fingers slowly and let it fall.

"I examined that curious document afterwards. It was signed by a very high personage, and stamped and countersigned by other high officials in various countries of Europe. In his trade—or shall I say, in

his mission?—that sort of talisman might have been necessary, no doubt. Even to the police itself—all but the heads—he had been known only as Sevrin the noted anarchist.

“He hung his head, biting his lower lip. A change had come over him, a sort of thoughtful, absorbed calmness. Nevertheless, he panted. His sides worked visibly, and his nostrils expanded and collapsed in weird contrast with his sombre aspect of a fanatical monk in a meditative attitude, but with something, too, in his face of an actor intent upon the terrible exigencies of his part. Before him Horne declaimed, haggard and bearded, like an inspired denunciatory prophet from a wilderness. Two fanatics. They were made to understand each other. Does this surprise you? I suppose you think that such people would be foaming at the mouth and snarling at each other?”

I protested hastily that I was not surprised in the least; that I thought nothing of the kind; that anarchists in general were simply inconceivable to me mentally, morally, logically, sentimentally, and even physically. X received this declaration with his usual woodenness and went on.

“Horne had burst out into eloquence. While pouring out scornful invective, he let tears escape from his eyes and roll down his black beard unheeded. Sevrin panted quicker and quicker. When he opened his mouth to speak, everyone hung on his words.

“‘Don’t be a fool, Horne,’ he began. ‘You know very well that I have done this for none of the reasons you are throwing at me.’ And in a moment he became outwardly as steady as a rock under the other’s lurid stare. ‘I have been thwarting, deceiving, and betraying you—from conviction.’

“He turned his back on Horne, and addressing the girl, repeated the words: ‘From conviction.’

“It’s extraordinary how cold she looked. I suppose she could not think of any appropriate gesture. There can have been few precedents indeed for such a situation.

“‘Clear as daylight,’ he added. ‘Do you understand what that means? From conviction.’

“And still she did not stir. She did not know what to do. But the luckless wretch was about to give her the opportunity for a beautiful and correct gesture.

“‘I have felt in me the power to make you share this conviction,’ he protested, ardently. He had forgotten himself; he made a step towards her—perhaps he stumbled. To me he seemed to be stooping low as if to touch the hem of her garment. And then the appropriate gesture came. She snatched her skirt away from his polluting contact and averted her head with an upward tilt. It was magnificently done, this gesture of conventionally unstained honour, of an unblemished high-minded amateur.

"Nothing could have been better. And he seemed to think so, too, for once more he turned away. But this time he faced no one. He was again panting frightfully, while he fumbled hurriedly in his waistcoat pocket, and then raised his hand to his lips. There was something furtive in this movement, but directly afterwards his bearing changed. His laboured breathing gave him a resemblance to a man who had just run a desperate race; but a curious air of detachment, of sudden and profound indifference, replaced the strain of the striving effort. The race was over. I did not want to see what would happen next. I was only too well aware. I tucked the young lady's arm under mine without a word, and made my way with her to the stairs.

"Her brother walked behind us. Half-way up the short flight she seemed unable to life her feet high enough for the steps, and we had to pull and push to get her to the top. In the passage she dragged herself along, hanging on my arm, helplessly bent like an old woman. We issued into an empty street through a half-open door, staggering like besotted revellers. At the corner we stopped a four-wheeler, and the ancient driver looked round from his box with morose scorn at our efforts to get her in. Twice during the drive I felt her collapse on my shoulder in a half faint. Facing us, the youth in knickerbockers remained as mute as a fish, and, till he jumped out with the latch-key, sat more still than I would have believed it possible.

"At the door of their drawing-room she left my arm and walked in first, catching at the chairs and tables. She unpinned her hat, then, exhausted with the effort, her cloak still hanging from her shoulders, flung herself into a deep armchair, sideways, her face half buried in a cushion. The good brother appeared silently before her with a glass of water. She motioned it away. He drank it himself and walked off to a distant corner—behind the grand piano, somewhere. All was still in this room where I had seen, for the first time, Sevrin, the anti-anarchist, captivated and spell-bound by the consummate and hereditary grimaces that in a certain sphere of life take the place of feelings with an excellent effect. I suppose her thoughts were busy with the same memory. Her shoulders shook violently. A pure attack of nerves. When it quieted down she affected firmness, 'What is done to a man of that sort? What will they do to him?'

"'Nothing. They can do nothing to him,' I assured her, with perfect truth. I was pretty certain he had died in less than twenty minutes from the moment his hand had gone to his lips. For if his fanatical anti-anarchism went even as far as carrying poison in his pocket, only to rob his adversaries of legitimate vengeance, I knew he would take care to provide something that would not fail him when required.

"She drew an angry breath. There were red spots on her cheeks and a feverish brilliance in her eyes.

"Has ever any one been exposed to such a terrible experience? To think that he had held my hand! That man! Her face twitched, she gulped down a pathetic sob. 'If I ever felt sure of anything, it was of Sevrin's high-minded motives.'

"Then she began to weep quietly, which was good for her. Then through her flood of tears, half resentful, 'What was it he said to me?—' 'From conviction!' It seemed a vile mockery. What could he mean by it?

"That, my dear young lady,' I said, gently, 'is more than I or anybody else can ever explain to you.'

Mr. X flicked a crumb off the front of his coat.

"And that was strictly true as to her. Though Horne, for instance, understood very well; and so did I, especially after we had been to Sevrin's lodging in a dismal back street of an intensely respectable quarter. Horne was known there as a friend, and we had no difficulty in being admitted, the slatternly maid merely remarking, as she let us in, that 'Mr. Sevrin had not been home that night.' We forced open a couple of drawers in the way of duty, and found a little useful information. The most interesting part was his diary; for this man, engaged in such deadly work, had the weakness to keep a record of the most damnatory kind. There were his acts and also his thoughts laid bare to us. But the dead don't mind that. They don't mind anything.

"'From conviction.' Yes. A vague but ardent humanitarianism had urged him in his first youth into the bitterest extremity of negation and revolt. Afterwards his optimism flinched. He doubted and became lost. You have heard of converted atheists. These turn often into dangerous fanatics, but the soul remains the same. After he had got acquainted with the girl, there are to be met in that diary of his very queer politico-amorous rhapsodies. He took her sovereign grimaces with deadly seriousness. He longed to convert her. But all this cannot interest you. For the rest, I don't know if you remember—it is a good many years ago now—the journalistic sensation of the 'Hermione Street Mystery'; the finding of a man's body in the cellar of an empty house; the inquest; some arrests; many surmises—then silence—the usual end for many obscure martyrs and confessors. The fact is, he was not enough of an optimist. You must be a savage, tyrannical, pitiless, thick-and-thin optimist, like Horne, for instance, to make a good social rebel of the extreme type.

He rose from the table. A waiter hurried up with his overcoat; another held his hat in readiness.

"But what became of the young lady?" I asked.

"Do you really want to know?" he said, buttoning himself in his fur coat carefully. "I confess to the small malice of sending her Sevrin's diary. She went into retirement; then she went to Florence; then she

went into retreat in a convent. I can't tell where she will go next. What does it matter? Gestures! Gestures! Mere gestures of her class."

He fitted on his glossy high hat with extreme precision, and casting a rapid glance round the room, full of well-dressed people, innocently dining, muttered between his teeth:

"And nothing else! That is why their kind is fated to perish."

I never met Mr. X again after that evening. I took to dining at my club. On my next visit to Paris I found my friend all impatience to hear of the effect produced on me by this rare item of his collection. I told him all the story, and he beamed on me with the pride of his distinguished specimen.

"Isn't X well worth knowing?" he bubbled over in great delight. "He's unique, amazing, absolutely terrific."

His enthusiasm grated upon my finer feelings. I told him curtly that the man's cynicism was simply abominable.

"Oh, abominable! abominable!" assented my friend, effusively. "And then, you know, he likes to have his little jokes sometimes," he added in a confidential tone.

I fail to understand the connection of this last remark. I have been utterly unable to discover where in all this the joke comes in.

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

There was a time when the name of Richard Harding Davis rang through the land and eager readers all over the nation, if not the globe, waited impatiently for his latest story. He was the beau ideal of romantic chivalry and quite wonderfully he looked the part. As war correspondent and world traveller, he had seen everything at least twice; his tall, movie-hero figure was a familiar sight on the great boulevards from the Champs Elysées to the Paseo de la Reforma. He knew everybody from the lowliest station porter to the beribboned diplomats of the council chambers; if he had wanted to, he might have spread an array of medals and ribbons across his own broad chest—and not infrequently he wanted to. And he wrote the sort of stories you might imagine he would write, full of gallant heroes and lovely women and noble renunciations and honorable conduct, backgrounded by glittering cities and war-torn countryside from China to Peru. Somewhere in France is his best spy story, and Marie Gessler is a happy addition to our gallery of female agents. Read his story, *In the Fog*, some time; I promise you it will remain one of your long-time favorites in the mystery field.

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

MARIE GESSLER, known as Marie Chaumontel, Jeanne d'Avrechy, the Countess d'Aurillac, was German. Her father, who served through the Franco-Prussian War, was a German spy. It was from her mother she learned to speak French sufficiently well to satisfy even an Academician and, among Parisians, to pass as one. Both her parents were dead. Before they departed, knowing they could leave their daughter nothing save their debts, they had her trained as a nurse. But when they were gone, Marie in the Berlin hospitals played politics, intrigued, indiscriminately misused the appealing, violet eyes. There was a scandal; several scandals. At the age of twenty-five she was dismissed from the Municipal Hospital, and as now—save for the violet eyes—she was without resources, as a *compagnon de voyage* with a German doctor she travelled to Monte Carlo. There she abandoned the doctor for Henri Ravignac, a captain in the French Aviation Corps, who, when his leave ended, escorted her to Paris.

The duties of Captain Ravignac kept him in barracks near the aviation field, but Marie he established in his apartments on the Boulevard Haussmann. One day he brought from the barracks a roll of blue-prints, and as he was locking them in a drawer, said: "The Germans would pay through the nose for these!" The remark was indiscreet, but then

Marie had told him she was French, and any one would have believed her.

The next morning the same spirit of adventure that had exiled her from the Berlin hospitals carried her with the blue-prints to the German embassy. There, greatly shocked, they first wrote down her name and address, and then, indignant at her proposition, ordered her out. But the day following a strange young German who was not at all indignant, but, on the contrary, quite charming, called upon Marie. For the blue-prints he offered her a very large sum, and that same hour with them and Marie departed for Berlin. Marie did not need the money. Nor did the argument that she was serving her country greatly impress her. It was rather that she loved intrigue. And so she became a spy.

Henri Ravignac, the man she had robbed of the blue-prints, was tried by court martial. The charge was treason, but Charles Ravignac, his younger brother, promised to prove that the guilty one was the girl, and to that end obtained leave of absence and spent much time and money. At the trial he was able to show the record of Marie in Berlin and Monte Carlo; that she was the daughter of a German secret agent; that on the afternoon the prints disappeared Marie, with an agent of the German embassy had left Paris for Berlin. In consequence of this the charge of selling military secrets was altered to one of "gross neglect," and Henri Ravignac was sentenced to two years in the military prison at Tours. But he was of an ancient and noble family, and when they came to take him from his cell in the Cherche-Midi, he was dead. Charles, his brother, disappeared. It was said he also had killed himself; that he had been appointed a military attaché in South America; that to revenge his brother he had entered the secret service; but whatever became of him no one knew. All that was certain was that, thanks to the act of Marie Gessler, on the rolls of the French army the ancient and noble name of Ravignac no longer appeared.

In her chosen profession Marie Gessler found nothing discreditable. Of herself her opinion was not high, and her opinion of men was lower. For her smiles she had watched several sacrifice honor, duty, loyalty; and she held them and their kind in contempt. To lie, to cajole, to rob men of secrets they thought important, and of secrets the importance of which they did not even guess, was to her merely an intricate and exciting game.

She played it very well. So well that in the service her advance was rapid. On important missions she was sent to Russia, through the Balkans; even to the United States. There, with credentials as an army nurse, she inspected our military hospitals and unobtrusively asked many innocent questions.

When she begged to be allowed to work in her beloved Paris, "they"

told her when war came "they" intended to plant her inside that city, and that, until then, the less Paris knew of her the better.

But just before the great war broke, to report on which way Italy might jump, she was sent to Rome, and it was not until September she was recalled. The telegram informed her that her Aunt Elizabeth was ill, and that at once she must return to Berlin. This, she learned from the code book wrapped under the cover of her thermos bottle, meant that she was to report to the general commanding the German forces at Soissons.

From Italy she passed through Switzerland, and, after leaving Basle, on military trains was rushed north to Luxemburg, and then west to Laon. She was accompanied by her companion, Bertha, an elderly and respectable, even distinguished-looking female. In the secret service her number was 528. Their passes from the war office described them as nurses of the German Red Cross. Only the Intelligence Department knew their real mission. With her also, as her chauffeur, was a young Italian soldier of fortune, Paul Anfossi. He had served in the Belgian Congo, in the French Foreign Legion in Algiers, and spoke all the European languages. In Rome, where as a wireless operator he was serving a commercial company, in selling Marie copies of messages he had memorized, Marie had found him useful, and when war came she obtained for him, from the Wilhelmstrasse, the number 292. From Laon, in one of the automobiles of the General Staff, the three spies were driven first to Soissons, and then along the road to Meaux and Paris, to the Village of Neufchelles. They arrived at midnight, and in a château of one of the champagne princes, found the colonel commanding the Intelligence Bureau. He accepted their credentials, destroyed them, and replaced them with a *laisser-passer* signed by the mayor of Laon. That dignitary, the colonel explained, to citizens of Laon fleeing to Paris and the coast had issued many passes. But as now between Laon and Paris there were three German armies, the refugees had been turned back and their passes confiscated.

"From among them," said the officer, "we have selected one for you. It is issued to the wife of Count d'Aurillac, a captain of reserves, and her aunt, Madame Benet. It asks for those ladies and their chauffeur, Briand, a safe-conduct through the French military lines. If it gets you into Paris you will destroy it and assume another name. The Count d'Aurillac is now with his regiment in that city. If he learned of the presence there of his wife, he would seek her, and that would not be good for you. So, if you reach Paris, you will become a Belgian refugee. You are high-born and rich. Your château has been destroyed. But you have money. You will give liberally to the Red Cross. You will volunteer to nurse in the hospitals. With your sad story of ill treatment by

us, with your high birth, and your knowledge of nursing, which you acquired, of course, only as an amateur, you should not find it difficult to join the Ladies of France, or the American Ambulance. What you learn from the wounded English and French officers and the French doctors you will send us through the usual channels."

"When do I start?" asked the woman.

"For a few days," explained the officer, "you remain in this château. You will keep us informed of what is going forward after we withdraw."

"Withdraw?" It was more of an exclamation than a question. Marie was too well trained to ask questions.

"We are taking up a new position," said the officer, "on the Aisne."

The woman, incredulous, stared.

"And we do not enter Paris?"

"You do," returned the officer. "That is all that concerns you. We will join you later—in the spring. Meanwhile, for the winter we intrench ourselves along the Aisne. In a chimney of this château we have set up a wireless outfit. We are leaving it intact. The chauffeur Briand—who, you must explain to the French, you brought with you from Laon, and who has been long in your service—will transmit whatever you discover. We wish especially to know of any movement toward our left. If they attack in front from Soissons, we are prepared; but of any attempt to cross the Oise and take us in flank, you must warn us."

The officer rose and hung upon himself his field-glasses, map-cases, and side-arms.

"We leave you now," he said. "When the French arrive you will tell them your reason for halting at this château was that the owner, Monsieur Iverney, and his family are friends of your husband. You found us here, and we detained you. And so long as you can use the wireless, make excuses to remain. If they offer to send you on to Paris, tell them your aunt is too ill to travel."

"But they will find the wireless," said the woman. "They are sure to use the towers for observation, and they will find it."

"In that case," said the officer, "you will suggest to them that we fled in such haste we had no time to dismantle it. Of course, you had no knowledge that it existed, or, as a loyal French woman, you would have at once told them." To emphasize his next words the officer pointed at her: "Under no circumstances," he continued, "must you be suspected. If they should take Briand in the act, should they have even the least doubt concerning him, you must repudiate him entirely. If necessary, to keep your own skirts clear, it would be your duty yourself to denounce him as a spy."

"Your first orders," said the woman, "were to tell them Briand had been long in my service; that I brought him from my home in Laon."

"He might be in your service for years," returned the colonel, "and you not know he was a German agent."

"If to save myself I inform upon him," said Marie, "of course you know you will lose him."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "A wireless operator," he retorted, "we can replace. But for you, and for the service you are to render in Paris, we have no substitute. You must not be found out. You are invaluable."

The spy inclined her head: "I thank you," she said.

The officer sputtered indignantly.

"It is not a compliment," he exclaimed; "it is an order. You must not be found out!"

Withdrawn some two hundred yards from the Paris road, the château stood upon a wooded hill. Except directly in front, trees of great height surrounded it. The tips of their branches brushed the windows; interlacing, they continued until they overhung the wall of the estate. Where it ran with the road the wall gave way to a lofty gate and iron fence, through which those passing could see a stretch of noble turf, as wide as a polo-field, borders of flowers disappearing under the shadows of the trees; and the château itself, with its terrace, its many windows, its high-pitched, sloping roof, broken by towers and turrets.

Through the remainder of the night there came from the road to those in the château the roar and rumbling of the army in retreat. It moved without panic, disorder, or haste, but unceasingly. Not for an instant was there a breathing-spell. And when the sun rose, the three spies—the two women and the chauffeur—who in the great château were now alone, could see as well as hear the gray column of steel rolling past below them.

The spies knew that the gray column had reached Claye, had stood within fifteen miles of Paris, and then upon Paris had turned its back. They knew also that the reverberations from the direction of Meaux, that each moment grew more loud and savage, were the French "seventy-fives" whipping the gray column forward. Of what they felt the Germans did not speak. In silence they looked at each other, and in the eyes of Marie was bitterness and resolve.

Toward noon Marie met Anfossi in the great drawing-room that stretched the length of the terrace and from the windows of which, through the park gates, they could see the Paris road.

"This, that is passing now," said Marie, "is the last of our rear-guard. Go to your tower," she ordered, "and send word that except for stragglers and the wounded our column has just passed through Neufchelles, and that any moment we expect the French." She raised her hand im-

pressively. "From now," she warned, "we speak French, we think French, we are French!"

Anfossi, or Briand, as now he called himself, addressed her in that language. His tone was bitter. "Pardon my lese-majesty," he said, "but this chief of your Intelligence Department is a *dummer Mensch*. He is throwing away a valuable life."

Marie exclaimed in dismay. She placed her hand upon his arm, and the violet eyes filled with concern.

"Not yours!" she protested.

"Absolutely!" returned the Italian. "I can send nothing by this knapsack wireless that they will not learn from others; from airmen, Uhlans, the peasants in the fields. And certainly I will be caught. Dead I am dead, but alive and in Paris the opportunities are unending. From the French Legion Etranger I have my honorable discharge. I am an expert wireless operator and in their Signal Corps I can easily find a place. Imagine me, then, on the Eiffel Tower. From the air I snatch news from all of France, from the Channel, the North Sea. You and I could work together, as in Rome. But here, between the lines, with a pass from a village *sous préfet*, it is ridiculous. I am not afraid to die. But to die because some one else is stupid, that is hard."

Marie clasped his hand in both of hers.

"You must not speak of death," she cried; "you know I must carry out my orders, that I must force you to take this risk. And you know that thought of harm to you tortures me!"

Quickly the young man disengaged his hand. The woman exclaimed with anger.

"Why do you doubt me?" she cried.

Briand protested vehemently.

"I do not doubt you."

"My affection, then?" In a whisper that carried with it the feeling of a caress Marie added softly: "My love?"

The young man protested miserably. "You make it very hard, *mademoiselle*," he cried. "You are my superior officer, I am your servant. Who am I that I should share with others——"

The woman interrupted eagerly.

"Ah, you are jealous!" she cried. "Is that why you are so cruel? But when I tell you I love you, and only you, can you not feel it is the truth?"

The young man frowned unhappily.

"My duty, *mademoiselle*!" he stammered.

With an exclamation of anger Marie left him. As the door slammed behind her, the young man drew a deep breath. On his face was the expression of ineffable relief.

In the hall Marie met her elderly companion, Bertha, now her aunt, Madame Benet.

"I heard you quarrelling," Bertha protested. "It is most indiscreet. It is not in the part of the Countess d'Aurillac that she makes love to her chauffeur."

Marie laughed noiselessly and drew her farther down the hall. "He is imbecile!" she exclaimed. "He will kill me with his solemn face and his conceit. I make love to him—yes—that he may work the more willingly. But he will have none of it. He is jealous of the others."

Madame Benet frowned.

"He resents the others," she corrected. "I do not blame him. He is a gentleman!"

"And the others," demanded Marie; "were they not of the most noble families of Rome?"

"I am old and I am ugly," said Bertha, "but to me Anfossi is always as considerate as he is to you who are so beautiful."

"An Italian gentleman," returned Marie, "does not serve in Belgian Congo unless it is the choice of that or the marble quarries."

"I do not know what his past may be," sighed Madame Benet, "nor do I ask. He is only a number, as you and I are only numbers. And I beg you to let us work in harmony. At such a time your love-affairs threaten our safety. You must wait."

Marie laughed insolently. "With the Du Barry," she protested, "I can boast that I wait for no man."

"No," replied the older woman; "you pursue him!"

Marie would have answered sharply, but on the instant her interest was diverted. For one week, by day and night, she had lived in a world peopled only by German soldiers. Beside her in the railroad carriage, on the station platforms, at the windows of the trains that passed the one in which she rode, at the grade crossings, on the bridges, in the roads that paralleled the tracks, choking the streets of the villages and spread over the fields of grain, she had seen only the gray-green uniforms. Even her professional eye no longer distinguished regiment from regiment, dragoon from grenadier, Uhlan from Hussar or Landsturm. Stripes, insignia, numerals, badges of rank, had lost their meaning. Those who wore them no longer were individuals. They were not even human. During the three last days the automobile, like a motorboat fighting the tide, had crept through a gray-green river of men, stained, as though from the banks, by mud and yellow clay. And for hours, while the car was blocked, and in fury the engine raced and purred, the gray-green river had rolled past her, slowly but as inevitably as lava down the slope of a volcano, bearing on its surface faces with staring eyes, thousands and thousands of eyes, some fierce and bloodshot, others

filled with weariness, homesickness, pain. At night she still saw them: the white faces under the sweat and dust, the eyes dumb, inarticulate, asking the answer. She had been suffocated by German soldiers, by the mass of them, engulfed and smothered; she had stifled in a land inhabited only by gray-green ghosts.

And suddenly, as though a miracle had been wrought, she saw upon the lawn, riding toward her, a man in scarlet, blue, and silver. One man riding alone.

Approaching with confidence, but alert; his reins fallen, his hands nursing his carbine, his eyes searched the shadows of the trees, the empty windows, even the sun-swept sky. His was the new face at the door, the new step on the floor. And the spy knew had she beheld an army corps it would have been no more significant, no more menacing, than the solitary *chasseur à cheval* scouting in advance of the enemy.

"We are saved!" exclaimed Marie, with irony. "Go quickly," she commanded, "to the bedroom on the second floor that opens upon the staircase, so that you can see all who pass. You are too ill to travel. They must find you in bed."

"And you?" said Bertha.

"I," cried Marie rapturously, "hasten to welcome our preserver!"

The preserver was a peasant lad. Under the white dust his cheeks were burned a brown-red, his eyes, honest and blue, through much staring at the skies and at horizon lines, were puckered and encircled with tiny wrinkles. Responsibility had made him older than his years, and in speech brief. With the beautiful lady who with tears of joy ran to greet him, and who in an ecstasy of happiness pressed her cheek against the nose of his horse, he was unimpressed. He returned to her her papers and gravely echoed her answers to his questions. "This château," he repeated, "was occupied by their General Staff; they have left no wounded here; you saw the last of them pass a half-hour since." He gathered up his reins.

Marie shrieked in alarm. "You will not leave us?" she cried.

For the first time the young man permitted himself to smile. "Others arrive soon," he said.

He touched his shako, wheeled his horse in the direction from which he had come, and a minute later Marie heard the hoofs echoing through the empty village.

When they came, the others were more sympathetic. Even in times of war a beautiful woman is still a beautiful woman. And the staff officers who moved into the quarters so lately occupied by the enemy found in the presence of the Countess d'Aurillac nothing to distress them. In the absence of her dear friend, Madame Iverney, the *châtelaine* of the château, she acted as their hostess. Her chauffeur showed the

company cooks the way to the kitchen, the larder, and the charcoal-box. She, herself, in the hands of General Andre placed the keys of the famous wine-cellar, and to the surgeon, that the wounded might be freshly bandaged, intrusted those of the linen-closet. After the indignities she had suffered while "detained" by les Boches, her delight and relief at again finding herself under the protection of her own people would have touched a heart of stone. And the hearts of the staff were not of stone. It was with regret they gave the countess permission to continue on her way. At this she exclaimed with gratitude. She assured them, were her aunt able to travel, she would immediately depart.

"In Paris she will be more comfortable than here," said the kind surgeon. He was a reservist, and in times of peace a fashionable physician and as much at his ease in a boudoir as in a field hospital. "Perhaps if I saw Madame Benet?"

At the suggestion the countess was overjoyed. But they found Madame Benet in a state of complete collapse. The conduct of the Germans had brought about a nervous breakdown.

"Though the bridges are destroyed at Meaux," urged the surgeon, "even with a detour, you can be in Paris in four hours. I think it is worth the effort."

But the mere thought of the journey threw Madame Benet into hysterics. She asked only to rest, she begged for an opiate to make her sleep. She begged also that they would leave the door open, so that when she dreamed she was still in the hands of the Germans, and woke in terror, the sound of the dear French voices and the sight of the beloved French uniforms might reassure her. She played her part well. Concerning her Marie felt not the least anxiety. But toward Briand, the chauffeur, the new arrivals were less easily satisfied.

The general sent his adjutant for the countess. When the adjutant had closed the door General Andre began abruptly:

"The chauffeur Briand," he asked, "you know him; you can vouch for him?"

"But, certainly!" protested Marie. "He is an Italian."

As though with sudden enlightenment, Marie laughed. It was as if now in the suspicion of the officer she saw a certain reasonableness. "Briand was so long in the Foreign Legion in Algiers," she explained, "where my husband found him, that we have come to think of him as French. As much French as ourselves, I assure you."

The general and his adjutant were regarding each other questioningly.

"Perhaps I should tell the countess," began the general, "that we have learned——"

The signal from the adjutant was so slight, so swift, that Marie barely intercepted it.

The lips of the general shut together like the leaves of a book. To show the interview was at an end, he reached for a pen.

"I thank you," he said.

"Of course," prompted the adjutant, "Madame d'Aurillac understands the man must not know we inquired concerning him."

General Andre frowned at Marie.

"Certainly not!" he commanded. "The honest fellow must not know that even for a moment he was doubted."

Marie raised the violet eyes reprovingly.

"I trust," she said with reproach, "I too well understand the feelings of a French soldier to let him know his loyalty is questioned."

With a murmur of appreciation the officers bowed and with a gesture of gracious pardon Marie left them.

Outside in the hall, with none but orderlies to observe, like a cloak the graciousness fell from her. She was drawn two ways. In her work Anfossi was valuable. But Anfossi suspected was less than of no value; he became a menace, a death-warrant.

General Andre had said, "We have learned—" and the adjutant had halted him. What had he learned? To know that, Marie would have given much. Still, one important fact comforted her. Anfossi alone was suspected. Had there been concerning herself the slightest doubt, they certainly would not have allowed her to guess her companion was under surveillance; they would not have asked one who was herself suspected to vouch for the innocence of a fellow conspirator. Marie found the course to follow difficult. With Anfossi under suspicion his usefulness was for the moment at an end; and to accept the chance offered her to continue on to Paris seemed most wise. On the other hand, if, concerning Anfossi, she had succeeded in allaying their doubts, the results most to be desired could be attained only by remaining where they were.

Their position inside the lines was of the greatest strategic value. The rooms of the servants were under the roof, and that Briand should sleep in one of them was natural. That to reach or leave his room he should constantly be ascending or descending the stairs also was natural. The field-wireless outfit, or, as he had disdainfully described it, the "knapsack" wireless, was situated not in the bedroom he had selected for himself, but in one adjoining. At other times this was occupied by the maid of Madame Iverney. To summon her maid Madame Iverney, from her apartment on the second floor, had but to press a button. And it was in the apartment of Madame Iverney, and on the bed of that lady, that Madame Benet now reclined. When through the open door she saw an officer or soldier mount the stairs, she pressed the button that rang a bell in the room of the maid. In this way, long before whoever was ascending the stairs could reach the top floor, warning of his

approach came to Anfossi. It gave him time to replace the dustboard over the fireplace in which the wireless was concealed and to escape into his own bedroom. The arrangement was ideal. And already information picked up in the halls below by Marie had been conveyed to Anfossi to relay in a French cipher to the German General Staff at Rheims.

Marie made an alert and charming hostess. To all who saw her it was evident that her mind was intent only upon the comfort of her guests. Throughout the day many came and went, but each she made welcome; to each as he departed she called "*bonne chance*." Efficient, tireless, tactful, she was everywhere: in the dining-room, in the kitchen, in the bedrooms, for the wounded finding mattresses to spread in the gorgeous salons of the champagne prince; for the soldier-chauffeurs carrying wine into the courtyard, where the automobiles panted and growled, and the arriving and departing shrieked for right of way. At all times an alluring person, now the one woman in a tumult of men, her smart frock covered by an apron, her head and arms bare, undismayed by the sight of the wounded or by the distant rumble of the guns, the Countess d'Aurillac was an inspiring and beautiful picture. The eyes of the officers, young and old, informed her of that fact, one of which already she was well aware. By the morning of the next day she was accepted as the owner of the château. And though continually she reminded the staff she was present only as the friend of her school-mate, Madame Iverney, they deferred to her as to a hostess. Many of them she already saluted by name, and to those who with messages were constantly motoring to and from the front at Soissons she was particularly kind. Overnight the legend of her charm, of her devotion to the soldiers of all ranks, had spread from Soissons to Meaux, and from Meaux to Paris. It was noon of that day when from the window of the second story Marie saw an armored automobile sweep into the courtyard. It was driven by an officer, young and appallingly good-looking, and, as was obvious by the way he spun his car, one who held in contempt both the law of gravity and death. That he was some one of importance seemed evident. Before he could alight the adjutant had raced to meet him. With her eye for detail Marie observed that the young officer, instead of imparting information, received it. He must, she guessed, have just arrived from Paris, and his brother officer either was telling him the news or giving him his orders. Whichever it might be, in what was told him the new arrival was greatly interested. One instant in indignation his gauntleted fist beat upon the steering-wheel, the next he smiled with pleasure. To interpret this pantomime was difficult; and, the better to inform herself, Marie descended the stairs.

As she reached the lower hall the two officers entered. To the spy

the man last to arrive was always the one of greatest importance; and Marie assured herself that through her friend, the adjutant, to meet with this one would prove easy.

But the chauffeur commander of the armored car made it most difficult. At sight of Marie, much to her alarm, as though greeting a dear friend, he snatched his kepi from his head and sprang toward her.

"The major," he cried, "told me you were here, that you are Madame d'Aurillac." His eyes spoke his admiration. In delight he beamed upon her. "I might have known it!" he murmured. With the confidence of one who is sure he brings good news, he laughed happily. "And I," he cried, "am 'Pierrot'!"

Who the devil "Pierrot" might be the spy could not guess. She knew only that she wished by a German shell "Pierrot" and his car had been blown to tiny fragments. Was it a trap, she asked herself, or was the handsome youth really some one the Countess d'Aurillac should know. But, as from his introducing himself it was evident he could not know that lady very well, Marie took courage and smiled.

"Which 'Pierrot'?" she parried.

"Pierre Thierry!" cried the youth.

To the relief of Marie he turned upon the adjutant and to him explained who Pierre Thierry might be.

"Paul d'Aurillac," he said, "is my dearest friend. When he married this charming lady I was stationed in Algiers, and but for the war I might never have met her."

To Marie, with his hand on his heart in a most charming manner, he bowed. His admiration he made no effort to conceal.

"And so," he said, "I know why there is war!"

The adjutant smiled indulgently, and departed on his duties, leaving them alone. The handsome eyes of Captain Thierry were raised to the violet eyes of Marie. They appraised her boldly and as boldly expressed their approval.

In burlesque the young man exclaimed indignantly: "Paul deceived me!" he cried. "He told me he had married the most beautiful woman in Laon. He has married the most beautiful woman in France!"

To Marie this was not impertinence, but gallantry.

This was a language she understood, and this was the type of man, because he was the least difficult to manage, she held most in contempt.

"But about you, Paul did not deceive me," she retorted. In apparent confusion her eyes refused to meet his. "He told me 'Pierrot' was a most dangerous man!"

She continued hurriedly. With wifely solicitude she asked concerning Paul. She explained that for a week she had been a prisoner in the château, and, since the mobilization, of her husband save that he was

with his regiment in Paris she had heard nothing. Captain Thierry was able to give her later news. Only the day previous, on the boulevards, he had met Count d'Aurillac. He was at the Grand Hôtel, and as Thierry was at once motoring back to Paris he would give Paul news of their meeting. He hoped he might tell him that soon his wife also would be in Paris. Marie explained that only the illness of her aunt prevented her from that same day joining her husband. Her manner became serious.

"And what other news have you?" she asked. "Here on the firing-line we know less of what is going forward than you in Paris."

So Pierre Thierry told her all he knew. They were preparing despatches he was at once to carry back to the General Staff, and, for the moment, his time was his own. How could he better employ it than in talking of the war with a patriotic and charming French woman?

In consequence Marie acquired a mass of facts, gossip, and guesses. From these she mentally selected such information as, to her employers across the Aisne, would be of vital interest.

And to rid herself of Thierry and on the fourth floor seek Anfossi was now her only wish. But, in attempting this, by the return of the adjutant she was delayed. To Thierry the adjutant gave a sealed envelope.

"Thirty-one, Boulevard des Invalides," he said. With a smile he turned to Marie. "And you will accompany him!"

"I!" exclaimed Marie. She was sick with sudden terror.

But the tolerant smile of the adjutant reassured her.

"The count, your husband," he explained, "has learned of your detention here by the enemy, and he has besieged the General Staff to have you convoyed safely to Paris." The adjutant glanced at a field telegram he held open in his hand. "He asks," he continued, "that you be permitted to return in the car of his friend, Captain Thierry, and that on arriving you join him at the Grand Hôtel."

Thierry exclaimed with delight.

"But how charming!" he cried. "To-night you must both dine with me at La Rue's." He saluted his superior officer. "Some petrol, sir," he said. "And I am ready." To Marie he added: "The car will be at the steps in five minutes." He turned and left them.

The thoughts of Marie, snatching at an excuse for delay, raced madly. The danger of meeting the Count d'Aurillac, her supposed husband, did not alarm her. The Grand Hôtel has many exits, and, even before they reached it, for leaving the car she could invent an excuse that the gallant Thierry would not suspect. But what now concerned her was how, before she was whisked away to Paris, she could convey to Anfossi the information she had gathered from Thierry. First, of a woman over-

come with delight at being reunited with her husband she gave an excellent imitation; then she exclaimed in distress: "But my aunt, Madade Benet!" she cried. "I cannot leave her!"

"The sisters of St. Francis," said the adjutant, arrive within an hour to nurse the wounded. They will care also for your aunt."

Marie concealed her chagrin. "Then I will at once prepare to go," she said.

The adjutant handed her a slip of paper. "Your *laissez-passer* to Paris," he said. "You leave in five minutes, madame!"

As temporary hostess of the château Marie was free to visit any part of it, and as she passed her door a signal from Madame Benet told her that Anfossi was on the fourth floor, that he was at work, and that the coast was clear. Softly, in the felt slippers she always wore, as she explained, in order not to disturb the wounded, she mounted the staircase. In her hand she carried the housekeeper's keys, and as an excuse it was her plan to return with an armful of linen for the arriving Sisters. But Marie never reached the top of the stairs. When her eyes rose to the level of the fourth floor she came to a sudden halt. At what she saw terror gripped her, bound her hand and foot, and turned her blood to ice.

At her post for an instant Madame Benet had slept, and an officer of the staff, led by curiosity, chance, or suspicion, had, unobserved and unannounced, mounted to the fourth floor. When Marie saw him he was in front of the room that held the wireless. His back was toward her, but she saw that he was holding the door to the room ajar, that his eye was pressed to the opening, and that through it he had pushed the muzzle of his automatic. What would be the fate of Anfossi Marie knew. Nor did she for an instant consider it. Her thoughts were of her own safety; that she might live. Not that she might still serve the Wilhelmstrasse, the Kaiser, or the Fatherland; but that she might live. In a moment Anfossi would be denounced, the château would ring with the alarm, and, though she knew Anfossi would not betray her, by others she might be accused. To avert suspicion from herself she saw only one way open. She must be the first to denounce Anfossi.

Like a deer she leaped down the marble stairs and, in a panic she had no need to assume, burst into the presence of the staff.

"Gentlemen!" she gasped, "my servant—the chauffeur—Briand is a spy! There is a German wireless in the château. He is using it! I have seen him." With exclamations, the officers rose to their feet. General Andre alone remained seated. General Andre was a veteran of many Colonial wars: Cochinchina, Algiers, Morocco. The great war, when it came, found him on duty in the Intelligence Department. His aquiline nose, bristling white eyebrows, and flashing, restless eyes gave him his nickname of *l'Aigle*.

In amazement, the flashing eyes were now turned upon Marie. He glared at her as though he thought she suddenly had flown mad.

"A German wireless!" he protested. "It is impossible!"

"I was on the fourth floor," panted Marie, "collecting linen for the Sisters. In the room next to the linen closet I heard a strange buzzing sound. I opened the door softly. I saw Briand with his back to me seated by an instrument. There were receivers clamped to his ears! My God! The disgrace. The disgrace to my husband and to me, who vouched for him to you!" Apparently in an agony of remorse, the fingers of the woman laced and interlaced. "I cannot forgive myself!"

The officers moved toward the door, but General Andre halted them. Still in a tone of incredulity, he demanded: "When did you see this?"

Marie knew the question was coming, knew she must explain how she saw Briand, and yet did not see the staff officer who, with his prisoner, might now at any instant appear. She must make it plain she had discovered the spy and left the upper part of the house before the officer had visited it. When that was she could not know, but the chance was that he had preceded her by only a few minutes.

"When did you see this?" repeated the general.

"But just now," cried Marie; "not ten minutes since."

"Why did you not come to me at once?"

"I was afraid," replied Marie. "If I moved I was afraid he might hear me, and he, knowing I would expose him, would kill me—and so escape you!" There was an eager whisper of approval. For silence, General Andre slapped his hand upon the table.

"Then," continued Marie, "I understood with the receivers on his ears he could not have heard me open the door, nor could he hear me leave, and I ran to my aunt. The thought that we had harbored such an animal sickened me, and I was weak enough to feel faint. But only for an instant. Then I came here." She moved swiftly to the door. "Let me show you the room," she begged; "you can take him in the act." Her eyes, wild with the excitement of the chase, swept the circle. "Will you come?" she begged.

Unconscious of the crisis he interrupted, the orderly on duty opened the door.

"Captain Thierry's compliments," he recited mechanically, "and is he to delay longer for Madame d'Aurillac?"

With a sharp gesture General Andre waved Marie toward the door. Without rising, he inclined his head. "Adieu, madame," he said. "We act at once upon your information. I thank you!"

As she crossed from the hall to the terrace, the ears of the spy were assaulted by a sudden tumult of voices. They were raised in threats and curses. Looking back, she saw Anfossi descending the stairs. His hands were held above his head; behind him, with his automatic, the staff

officer she had surprised on the fourth floor was driving him forward. Above the clenched fists of the soldiers that ran to meet him, the eyes of Anfossi were turned toward her. His face was expressionless. His eyes neither accused nor reproached. And with the joy of one who has looked upon and then escaped the guillotine, Marie ran down the steps to the waiting automobile. With a pretty cry of pleasure she leaped into the seat beside Thierry. Gayly she threw out her arms. "To Paris!" she commanded. The handsome eyes of Thierry, eloquent with admiration, looked back into hers. He stooped, threw in the clutch, and the great gray car, with the machine gun and its crew of privates guarding the rear, plunged through the park.

"To Paris!" echoed Thierry.

In the order in which Marie had last seen them, Anfossi and the staff officer entered the room of General Andre, and upon the soldiers in the hall the door was shut. The face of the staff officer was grave, but his voice could not conceal his elation.

"My general," he reported, "I found this man in the act of giving information to the enemy. There is a wireless——"

General Andre rose slowly. He looked neither at the officer nor at his prisoner. With frowning eyes he stared down at the maps upon his table.

"I know," he interrupted. "Some one has already told me." He paused, and then, as though recalling his manners, but still without raising his eyes, he added: "You have done well, sir."

In silence the officers of the staff stood motionless. With surprise they noted that, as yet, neither in anger nor curiosity had General Andre glanced at the prisoner. But of the presence of the general the spy was most acutely conscious. He stood erect, his arms still raised, but his body strained forward, and on the averted eyes of the general his own were fixed.

In an agony of supplication they asked a question.

At last, as though against his wish, toward the spy the general turned his head, and their eyes met. And still General Andre was silent. Then the arms of the spy, like those of a runner who has finished his race and breasts the tape exhausted, fell to his sides. In a voice low and vibrant he spoke his question.

"It has been so long, sir," he pleaded. "May I not come home?"

General Andre turned to the astonished group surrounding him. His voice was hushed like that of one who speaks across an open grave.

"Gentlemen," he began, "my children," he added. "A German spy, a woman, involved in a scandal your brother in arms, Henri Ravignac. His honor, he thought, was concerned, and without honor he refused to live. To prove him guiltless his younger brother Charles asked leave to seek out the woman who had betrayed Henri, and by us was detailed

on secret service. He gave up home, family, friends. He lived in exile, in poverty, at all times in danger of a swift and ignoble death. In the War Office we know him as one who has given to his country services she cannot hope to reward. For she cannot return to him the years he has lost. She cannot return to him his brother. But she can and will clear the name of Henri Ravnagac, and upon his brother Charles bestow promotion and honors."

The general turned and embraced the spy. "My children," he said, "welcome your brother. He has come home."

Before the car had reached the fortifications, Marie Gessler had arranged her plan of escape. She had departed from the château without even a hand-bag, and she would say that before the shops closed she must make purchases.

Le Printemps lay in their way, and she asked that, when they reached it, for a moment she might alight. Captain Thierry readily gave permission.

From the department store it would be most easy to disappear, and in anticipation Marie smiled covertly. Nor was the picture of Captain Thierry impatiently waiting outside unamusing.

But before Le Printemps was approached, the car turned sharply down a narrow street. On one side, along its entire length, ran a high gray wall, grim and forbidding. In it was a green gate studded with iron bolts. Before this the automobile drew suddenly to a halt. The crew of the armored car tumbled off the rear seat, and one of them beat upon the green gate. Marie felt a hand of ice clutch at her throat. But she controlled herself.

"And what is this?" she cried gayly.

At her side Captain Thierry was smiling down at her, but his smile was hateful.

"It is the prison of St. Lazare," he said. "It is not becoming," he added sternly, "that the name of the Countess d'Aurillac should be made common as the Paris road!"

Fighting for her life, Marie thrust herself against him; her arm that throughout the journey had rested on the back of the driving-seat caressed his shoulders; her lips and the violet eyes were close to his.

"Why should you care?" she whispered fiercely. "You have me! Let the Count d'Aurillac look after the honor of his wife himself."

The charming Thierry laughed at her mockingly.

"He means to," he said. "I am the Count d'Aurillac!"

GEORGE PREEDY

"George Preedy" is the pen name of Gabrielle Margaret Vere (Campbell) Long, as you may discover in the biographical dictionaries, and she is also "Marjorie Bowen," "Robert Paye," "John Winch," and "Joseph Shearing," a most prolific lady. Over the signature of Marjorie Bowen she has written a score and more of historical novels, and they are all good reading. As Joseph Shearing, she has written at least a dozen masterly fictional studies of crime based on some of the criminal masterpieces of life. Her first novel, a Marjorie Bowen production, was published when she was only 16, and was a remarkable success. "I was a born story-teller," she says in her autobiography. Nobody else has appraised her any better; and in *Supper with Madame Olshausen* we have an excellent specimen of her quality. The period of this tale is not important. Obviously any other period would have done just as well, for the stock-in-trade of the beautiful female spy is universal and ageless. Here, then, is an ingenious and colorful adventure in the best Marjorie-George-Joseph manner—and shall we get along with it?

SUPPER WITH MADAME OLSHAUSEN

And Prince Clement Louis of Grafenberg-Freiwaldau, Generalissimo of the Imperial Forces, in a summer pavilion outside Mons. Spanish Netherlands, 18th Century.

"I CANNOT CONCEIVE of any situation from which a man of breeding could not extricate himself with credit."

"And yet Your Serene Highness has had your difficulties," replied the Duke of Glückstadt with as much irony as he dared show in the presence of his Commander-in-Chief.

"Precisely, my dear Duke—I've had my difficulties, but no one has known about them."

Prince Clement Louis of Grafenberg-Freiwaldau, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, *Generalissimo* of the Imperial Forces, gave his amiable smile which did not cover good nature but complete indifference. Agreeable to all and interested in none, he was not popular with the ruling princes of the Empire, and the French nobility who composed his staff; but as his cold severity and his ruthless imperiousness were disguised by social tact and exquisite breeding, they were none of them able to find any cause for offence. He was one of the most considerable commanders of the day, and well knew his value: he could have made all these subordinate gentlemen devoted to him if he had

so wished; but he did not think this same devotion worth any trouble to gain. He worked with other weapons.

He then looked with his unruffled amiability at the Duke of Glückstadt, who plainly had something to say and did not know how to say it agreeably.

Prince Clement Louis rather suspected that the young German prince had come as a spokesman for the other generals; something was wrong no doubt, and he was expected to set it right. It would be, likely enough, one of the usual petty jealousies between themselves. Prince Clement Louis never allowed such matters to disturb his serenity.

The Imperial Forces were besieging Mons, and these two gentlemen sat in a small farmhouse which was the Imperial Headquarters. It was evening of a ripe summer day, and Prince Clement Louis hoped that the young German prince would not be long in coming to whatever affair he had in hand; for he, the Generalissimo, had an appointment for supper with Madame Olshausen, who was established in a small château or summer pavilion, in the woods beyond the Imperial lines.

"I believe, my dear Duke," he said pleasantly, "that you find yourself in one of these awkward situations that we were discussing. There has been some trouble, perhaps, with the French generals, or with the other German princes? If so, tell me plainly, and I will do my best to smooth matters over."

"Your Serene Highness always does that," replied the young German, "but I believe that this is a matter which even your tact will not so easily deal with."

"Are you speaking," asked the Prince suavely, "for yourself? Or do you come as a spokesman for the others?"

"As a spokesman for the others, Highness."

Prince Clement Louis smiled: he knew perfectly well why this young officer had been chosen to voice the complaint of his fellow-officers; he was at once the youngest of all the German princes who served the Imperial Eagle and the most agreeable to the Generalissimo. He was both sincere and ingenuous. He might venture far in delicate matters and give no offence. The others, arrogant and quarrelsome, would not be able to control themselves, and would damage their cause by the passion with which they put it forward.

Prince Clement Louis encouraged the young man with a brilliant look and smile. He really did not want to waste time; it was a delicious evening, and it was also two days since he had seen Madame Olshausen.

"Your Serene Highness knows, as well as we all know," said the young Duke hurriedly, "that there is a spy in the camp—some leakage of news of our plans."

"That has been discussed at the Council," replied the Generalissimo. "It can scarcely be any matter between my officers and myself."

"We believe that that is precisely what it is," replied the young man earnestly, "but it is very likely that Your Serene Highness will take what I am about to say extremely amiss."

"Then don't say it," replied Prince Clement Louis with smiling arrogance. "Let us waste no time, my dear Duke, on anything which is likely to cause trouble."

"Monseigneur," persisted the young Duke stubbornly, "there is a feeling of great discontent, of unrest, almost of panic among the men—among us, too, very definitely—about this question of the spy."

"You say the spy," replied Prince Clement Louis calmly, "but we do not know there is a spy: every possible investigation has been made, every possible precaution taken, and we have discovered nothing."

"But the ambush of the artillery train," replied the young man quickly, "and our surprise on the ramparts—the attack on the glacis—"

"No surprise at all, for the garrison was ready to meet us."

"A great many men were lost on both those occasions, Monseigneur."

"Both occasions may have been coincidences; we must consider the possibility of that. For myself, I was inclined to think there was a spy at work; but, as I say, after the most extensive investigations, nothing was discovered, and I cannot conceive yet, my dear Duke, quite what your mission is."

"You have ordered," replied the other, flushing thickly under his fair skin, "you have ordered, Monseigneur, a night attack on the citadel for tomorrow. If the enemy should be apprised of that. . . ."

"It is quite impossible," interrupted Prince Clement Louis. "Unless you entertain the monstrous supposition that one of my officers himself is a traitor; but that is an idea I refuse to entertain."

"There is no need to entertain it!" exclaimed the young man with some heat, "that is the last thought which has entered into any of our minds, Monseigneur; but we have considered—there are these two things ahead: the night attack tomorrow, and Maréchal d'Orbitello coming up with the reinforcements which we so greatly need. Supposing, Monseigneur, he was met and cut to pieces, like the artillery train?"

"That also is impossible," replied the Generalissimo. "The secret has been sternly kept, even my secretaries know nothing about it; the code is in my own possession, the messages have gone to and fro with a man of the utmost reliability. There is no one beyond yourselves, Highness, who can know of these two plans of mine."

"If they fail," insisted the young Duke, rising impatiently and restlessly, "we, it seems to me, are likely to be slaughtered in our trenches. If there is someone in our camp who knows the weakness of our numbers, that twice reinforcements have been cut off, that we have lost what we did lose by that last surprise—which certainly, before God, sir,

was a betrayal!—Maréchal d'Isenburg has only to come up from Brussels and annihilate us where we are. Our *liaison* has been interrupted and cut; there, too, is surely the work of a traitor!"

Prince Clement Louis looked steadily at the flushed and earnest young officer.

"I don't quite believe in this traitor of yours, my dear Duke," he replied. "Plans will go wrong: each case, as I say, may have been a matter of chance. I am forced to this conclusion, though I must say it seems unlikely; for there is no one whom I can possibly suspect . . . no one, indeed, to whose advantage it would be to betray me; for those who serve under me will find obviously their best advantage in supporting me."

"We think we know who has betrayed us," said the young Duke of Glückstadt, "and I have been sent here on the abominable errand of telling Your Highness who this person is—or whom we think it is."

"Why 'abominable'?" demanded Prince Clement Louis haughtily. "Shall I not be rejoiced to know? Never have I had so many misfortunes as during this siege of Mons; and if you have been skilful enough to discover the author of them, why should it be any offence to me?"

The young Duke did not reply, but walked uneasily up and down the worn, flagged floor. The windows were open on the violet twilight, and the air was pleasant with the perfume of late hay brought from the low fields beyond the encampment.

Prince Clement Louis glanced at the old clock beside the kitchen stove. Madame Olshausen would be already expecting him; it was a pity that this boy could not come sooner to the point. . . .

A small dim mirror, painted with a wreath of faded flowers on the frame, hung beneath the clock; and there Prince Clement Louis could see himself, in his ornate uniform, richly laced with knotted bullion, with his Orders sparkling over the lace on his breast, his long, stiff, military, powdered and pomaded curls, clasped with a diamond buckle, and his smooth, expressionless face, so handsome as to be almost effeminate.

He was not yet thirty, and had been commanding armies since he was eighteen; and, though he was so good looking and so amiable, with such a charming address and—when he chose—such caressing manners, his reputation was that of an unscrupulous, ruthless, arrogant and inflexible man. He had great gifts: those of energy, secrecy, indomitable courage; an unyielding fortitude and immutable patience. None of this showed in his appearance, which was splendid, superb and careful—almost to foppishness. He spent a great deal of the money that he made out of his successful campaigns and his various governments on lace and jewellery.

Now, while he was waiting for the young Duke to speak, he was

arranging the ruffles at his wrists, which were tied by wide black ribbons, and had been pulled awry by his gauntlets, which he had just removed. He had been reviewing the cavalry, and there was a speck or so of dust on the bullion on his cuffs. This he flicked away, still waiting for the Duke of Glückstadt to speak.

"We think," stammered that young man at last, red in the face with passion and agitation, "that Madame Olshausen is the spy."

Prince Clement Louis stared at the speaker, without any change in his expression.

"She accompanies Your Highness everywhere. She would have ample opportunity to discover your secrets and to sell them," insisted the young German prince, "and those creatures can always be easily bought. It is the petition of all of us that Your Highness send away this woman."

"But of course," replied Prince Clement Louis, with a mild courtesy which veiled a limitless arrogance, "it is quite impossible for us, my dear Duke, to discuss my private affairs. That is my answer to you all; and now"—he rose—"as I have an appointment with Madame Olshausen——"

"I've no doubt, Monseigneur," interrupted the young German obstinately. "And how do we know she will not, tonight, get everything out of you about the attack, about the reinforcements coming up—if she doesn't know it already! There have been a good many lives lost through this spy, Monseigneur, and we do not intend to stand by and see any more sacrificed. We demand that this woman be sent away, or at least arrested or watched."

"Who is in this?" demanded Clement Louis. "All of you?"

"All of us, Monseigneur. It is the common opinion of all of us, and it is noised abroad in the camp, even among the soldiers."

"And yet it never occurred to me," remarked Prince Clement Louis coldly, "and certainly I am better acquainted with the lady than any of you could possibly be."

The young Duke wanted to reply—but dared not: "But you sir, are obsessed, infatuate."

"You have introduced," continued the Generalissimo smoothly, "a subject that—as I said at first—I could not possibly discuss with anyone. If I were to take what you say seriously, I should have to be offended, and treat your interference as insolence; and I have no wish to do that. You are either all of you deceived by some foolish gossip of the camp, or you wish to insult me. Whichever case it may be, I shall take no notice of your action, it would be beneath me to do so."

"And we, I suppose, Monseigneur," replied the young man hotly, "are to wait here meekly and see all our plans go wrong—perhaps be murdered in our tents!"

Prince Clement Louis picked up his gloves from the plain kitchen table.

"Believe me," he smiled, "there is no danger whatever of that. For your own satisfaction I will tell you—and you may repeat it to your fellow-officers—that the woman is a fool, and absolutely incapable of what you suspect her; whoever this spy is, if there is a spy, it is someone of education and intelligence. Madame Olshausen knows no language but German; she can scarcely read or write; and she has just sufficient brains to keep out of all serious affairs. This is for your own satisfaction—to your formal embassy I have no formal answer; I absolutely decline to discuss my own affairs."

The calm assurance with which he spoke almost shook the deep conviction of the young man. Was it possible that they had, after all, made a mistake? That all the little shreds and scraps of evidence which, put together, had pointed to Madame Olshausen as the spy, were wrong? And yet there were several of them, older, wiser, more experienced men than himself, who had assured him that it was she and no other, and that only the infatuation of Prince Clement Louis for his mistress prevented him from seeing what she really was—a spy in the pay of the English and Hanoverians.

Hesitating, frowning, the young Duke said:

"It was damned odd about that artillery train, and damned odd about the assault upon the glacis. If it happens again——"

"It was," agreed the Generalissimo calmly, "as you remark, Highness, damned odd. . . . But I don't think it will happen again. It is possible of course, that we have some traitor at work, though I've combed the camp pretty thoroughly."

"Does your Highness know," persisted the young Duke doggedly, "the antecedents of Madame Olshausen? You took her from the stage when she was playing in the Italian comedy, under the name of Minetta; but who was she before that? Ask her, Monseigneur, if she was ever at the Elector of Hanover's Court, under the name of Madame Aurora Frey?"

"The woman has never been at any Court," replied Prince Clement Louis contemptuously, "and are you telling me that you have been investigating her career?"

"We have had to take measures of self-defence," replied the young man sullenly. "It was not until we had some very clear and good grounds to go upon that we ventured to approach Your Highness. We can, if you wish, put all our evidence before you; and we would appeal to you," he added with dignity, "to put your officers, your men and your Emperor before this woman."

"I have never," replied Prince Clement Louis, "had any creature attached to me who would be likely to be the least danger to any cause.

Please credit me with sufficient sense to know an intriguing woman of the world from a poor actress of the Comedy. There is really no more to be said."

"There is a great deal more to be said," protested the young Duke, "but I understand from Your Serene Highness that it cannot be said without offence."

"You are to understand exactly that," replied the Generalissimo. "I bid you good evening, or I shall be late for my appointment."

"With Madame Olshausen?"

"Precisely, with Madame Olshausen."

"And what am I to tell the others?"

"What you please, my dear Duke. You have heard what I have said, and you can gauge my sentiments and attitude. Any interference of the nature you suggest is grotesque. Do not force me to have to tell you all that it is dangerous as well."

"You carry it with a very high hand, Monseigneur. It is our lives that hang on this matter."

"And my honour; one will be regarded as jealously as the other. Good evening, Highness!" And Prince Clement Louis picked up his hat and left the farm, looking back with smiling malice at the discomfited and angry figure of the young Duke. His Serene Highness, with a light-coloured summer cloak over his gay uniform, rode rapidly to the pretty little pavilion where he had installed Madame Olshausen.

For six months he had taken this woman with him everywhere, and he could not remember any connexion of the kind which had endured so long. He utterly repudiated the idea that she in any way obsessed or infatuated him; but she certainly was charming, and he found in her company a satisfaction that he had never yet discovered in female society. Nothing could have amazed him more than what the young Duke of Glückstadt had just said to him. Practised as he was in social tact, it had been difficult for him to conceal this complete surprise, for Madame Olshausen, whom he had first seen dancing in the Italian comedy in Vienna, was the most inoffensive and foolish of creatures, and, as he had himself just declared, was totally illiterate—a peasant girl with no training beyond that of the circus and the theatre; indeed, her complete ignorance of all wordly affairs had been one of her main attractions for him; who was always weighed with heavy responsibilities, faced by grave issues, and involved in many ramifications of statecraft. With her there had always been relief and pleasure; in her company life went lazily. She had an air of innocence and freshness, and in gratitude for her gift of lovely gaiety he had solicited from the Emperor a barony for his favourite. For the past three months she had held Olshausen and its important revenues.

How lunatic were those men to suppose that he could possibly have

thus favoured and protected a woman who was in the least likely to betray him! He was almost as sure of her loyalty as he was of her fidelity; but not quite: he was always prepared for any woman to betray him with another man, though so far he was not aware that this had happened—largely, he supposed, because there were few men who had qualities to render them formidable as rivals. He had always been the most powerful and the most charming personality of any society in which he mingled. Any woman of taste or judgment was not likely to forsake him; but he always allowed for caprice. If he had been told—or if, rather, he had discovered—that Minetta Olshausen had been unfaithful to him, he might have believed it without too much difficulty; but that she was betraying him—stealing and telling his most intimate secrets for money—he refused to credit for a second.

Insolent stupidity to suggest such a thing! She was not capable of the mildest, most obvious, intrigues; why, he had been able to be completely at his ease with her—to say things before her—that he would have said before no one else; even, now he came to consider the matter (and he was bound to consider it a little after what the Duke of Glückstadt had said), to visit her with his code in his pocket, to leave important papers in his coat that hung all night in her chamber, to read letters in her presence and leave them lying on her dressing-table. She, a peasant from the Tyrol, knew nothing but that dialect, and a little German; Italian, and French, in which he usually corresponded, would be impossible for her to decipher.

Certainly those men had been right in this: that, if she had been both intelligent and false, she had had considerable opportunities to betray him.

The Prince was amazed at their impertinence, and did not quite know how to deal with it; he would force Madame Olshausen on them, of course, at every possible opportunity; he would give a supper, and invite them all, and set her at the head of the table. She should go with him everywhere. Her coach should have a prominent place at all reviews. He would induce the Emperor, when he had taken Mons and Brussels and could ask for more rewards, to make her a Duchess.

Both his pride and his passion jumped in this. Minetta Olshausen pleased him so much that he was prepared to do anything for her save marry her: he believed that he loved her; he certainly could not think without a wrench at the heart, most uncommon to his cold temperament, of leaving her; and now, of course, he could not have left her without submitting to the dictations of his officers. She was secure in her position for a long time to come, through his arrogant pride if not through his affection. He decided, as he rode through the slender avenue which led to the little château she occupied, that he would

make the most desperate efforts to discover who this spy was, and thus vindicate his judgment.

It had been, as the young Duke had remarked, "damned odd" about the artillery surprise; and also about the attack on the St. Nicholas Gate; but if there were a spy at work, surely he, Prince Clement Louis, who had never failed in anything yet, could discover the odious traitor, and that without too much ado? As for the matter of this request of which Glückstadt had been the mouthpiece, he would have to break any officer who mentioned it to him again; or, if a ruling prince dared to do so, insult him to such an extent that he would return home.

The Generalissimo could ill afford the withdrawal of any troops, but he would rather that half his forces left than be in any way dictated to by another. Madame Olshausen should stay even if the Confederacy fell to pieces; if need be, he reflected, he would leave the Emperor and obtain a command somewhere else. He was sufficiently famous to be able to demand his own terms. Poor young Glückstadt had spoken of a difficult situation which might arise to confound the nicest in judgment; and he had replied that he could not credit any such situation, which could not be efficiently dealt with by men of tact and breeding; and he smiled as he thought of the young Duke's embarrassment. There was no great difficulty about this particular situation: he knew how to deal with those generals of his, and also with Madame Olshausen.

She was waiting for him in a room which she had already been able to render charming. Whenever she followed the army, she took with her a quantity of baggage; and whatever deserted mansion or devastated château might be put at her disposal she rendered it almost immediately civilized and delightful. Her few servants were installed with her, and a troop of Black Cuirassiers kept guard in the court of honour. Prince Clement Louis knew all the household and all the soldiers; they were particularly selected for this delicate work. As for the servants, not one of them could possibly be a traitor, for they all came from his own estate of Grafenberg-Freiwaldau.

She greeted him with the most tender affection, the most joyous delight, and with her own hands took off his mantle. She was finely blonde and as pale and exquisite as the most fragile manner of flower, and, dressed in fine, floating laces and shimmering blue ribbons (for she knew that he liked both laces and ribbons), and hung with pearls which were part of his lavish gifts to her, she appeared like a creature too ethereal for mere humanity.

Supper was prepared and the pale candles lit. He saw to it that she was well-served. In everything he was fastidious and sumptuous.

Madame Olshausen said she had been dull all day, that it was rather lonely and sad in the little pavilion in the thick woods, from which

you could not even see the great fortress, nor the camp; but you could, she added, hear the guns firing, and there was something grim and frightening in that sound.

"The next time there is a review," he replied, "you shall come to it; you would like that, would you not?"

And she flushed with pleasure and cried out her gratitude; for never before had she received such an open honour.

After supper, which His Serene Highness enjoyed without the least alloy in his pleasure, the cloth was drawn and a case of small models of soldiers set out; Prince Clement Louis carefully arranged these. They were one of his chief amusements, and often something more than an amusement; for he preferred to plan the disposition of his troops in this manner instead of on paper.

Madame Olshausen sat on the arm of his chair and watched him as he quickly arranged the cavalry in small squads, one behind the other. He was already planning the manner of his state entry into Brussels, and he saw these small, lead figures magnified into the size of his Dragoons and Hussars, and the tiny metal flags into the grandeur of great standards, bearing the Imperial Eagles and his own arms and those of the Allies, and crowned with wreaths of laurels.

"Ah, so sure of taking Brussels!" she laughed; and he answered.

"Of course! I have never yet sat down before a town I have not taken."

"But there's Mons in the way," smiled Madame Olshausen.

"Mons will fall in a day, or two or three days."

"You're expecting reinforcements?"

And he, remembering the conversation with the young Duke of Glückstadt, was almost startled:

"Did I tell you that, Minetta?"

"Of course you told me that—how else could I know?"

How else indeed? And he had always used the most careless freedom towards her, as he would have used it towards one of his own generals . . . or a fool.

"Well," she laughed, putting her tiny hand caressingly on his epaulettes, "I hope we shall soon leave Mons. I want you very much to take this town, for I am rather weary of this little pavilion in the woods."

"I come here," he smiled, "almost every night; it is only in the day time that you are alone. Are you beginning to be tired of following the army?"

He turned to look at her as he spoke, and saw reflected an infinite passion in her candid eyes. He could not doubt that she loved him. He could scarcely doubt that he loved her. . . .

The Prince continued thoughtfully and with precision to arrange his military pieces. When he had them set out to his taste, he left them

on the table and leant back in the deep chair with arms. He had realized that he was fatigued. He had been up with the dawn, inspecting the trenches. It was two nights since he had been able to repose himself in the little pavilion in the woods; and he asked Madame Olshausen to call his valet, and, when the man came, gave him his Orders, taking them off one by one: the Golden Fleece, the White Eagle of Poland, the White Eagle of Prussia, coveted stars and crosses that had been his since he was a boy.

The valet took these away and locked them into a Chinese lacquer cabinet. Prince Clement Louis stood up to take off his heavy coat, and as he did so thought to put his hand in his pocket: there were some papers there, including that private cipher code that he never was without. He put all carelessly on the table beside the array of metal soldiers, and then he turned and went into the inner bedroom, which was so pleasantly lit by one silver lamp.

If it had not been for that absurd conversation with the Duke of Glückstadt it never would have occurred to His Serene Highness to turn back and look at Madame Olshausen through the half-open door.

She was still seated, so pale and airy and fair, on the arm of the big leather chair which he had just left; and she was bending over the soldiers, with her hands just hovering over those little squads of metal cavalry. He had not noticed, ever before, that she had shown any interest in those little toys of his; but was it over the soldiers her tiny hand was hovering? . . . Or over those papers that he had left—almost purposely left—for her inspection?

She was certainly flicking over the papers, and now she looked round, and assured herself that she was alone—not seeing him in the shadow of the door, so slightly ajar; and now she was reading: surely, although she could scarcely read or write her native tongue, she was carefully and deliberately reading that French document! Prince Clement Louis waited . . . a moment, two moments, five moments; and still Minetta Olshausen was reading the papers he had left on the table.

This was the first time that he had ever watched her, so sure and so careless had he always been in his dealing with the little Columbine. He went back into the bedroom, and considered. Of course, very likely there was nothing in it. In fact, it was absurd to think there was anything in it! She could not really have been reading. And that French paper had not been of any importance. What was of importance was in code, and it was ridiculous to suppose that she could de-code his cipher, the secret of which was known only to himself and his correspondents.

He came back to her. She was half curled up in her chair, in her flounces and ribbons and pearls, and seemed almost asleep. He gathered

up the papers quietly, and, with them in his hand, asked, with even more than his usual careless indifference in his manner:

"You were never at the Court of Hanover, were you, under the name of Madame Aurora Frey?"

She shuddered and stiffened; under his drooping lids her eyes gleamed as he had never seen them gleam before, but her self-command was admirable. She said:

"Monseigneur, what do you mean? I do not know the name at all."

The sound of the guns broke across the night: the usual night attack of the artillery on Mons.

Madame Olshausen sprang up, nervously wringing her hands. She seemed about to weep.

"I cannot endure it!" she cried. "It is so terrible, the cannonading day and night!"

"But it has never upset you before," remarked Prince Clement Louis, never ceasing to watch her keenly.

"It upsets me now!" she cried, throwing herself on to his breast; and that action heightened his suspicions. She would, of course, if she thought he doubted her, bring into play all the allurements which she knew affected him . . . endeavour to reduce him with every possible grace.

She clasped him closely and began to sob a little, resting her exquisite head on his breast; and the Prince, returning this embrace, for purposes of his own, asked again:

"You have never heard of Madame Aurora Frey?" He held her tightly, and this time he could have no doubt that the name caused her to stiffen. She became almost rigid in his arms.

"No!" she gasped out at once. "Why will you tease me? Of course it means nothing to me, and I have never been to Hanover."

"I thought not," he answered smoothly, "but someone mentioned that name to me today, and connected it with you."

"Who was it?" she asked too quickly.

"It doesn't matter," he replied, "since there is nothing in the story, eh, Minetta? It can be of no importance?"

"Of course, of none," she replied.

"Go to bed now," he said, disengaging himself from her, "and I will join you in a little while. I have some work to do still."

She left him, obedient at once. Never had he known her anything but obedient. She appeared more than ever innocent and childlike and graceful.

When she had left him, His Serene Highness sat for more than half an hour, carefully thinking, with no change in his expressionless face. Then he sent for Madame Olshausen's woman, Frau Dotler—a creature

in whom he could have complete trust; and, sitting there in his brocaded dressing-gown by the table on which the lead soldiers stood undisturbed, he questioned her; and to every question received a satisfactory answer.

Madame Olshausen neither sent nor received messages. She went out alone sometimes, certainly, but there was not the least reason to suspect her of any indiscretion.

"You think her," asked Prince Clement Louis, "very simple and foolish and illiterate, do you not—a peasant girl, in fact—about the simplest creature that you've ever had charge of?"

The woman said respectfully that so she did think.

"So I believe myself," smiled His Serene Highness. "Now will you give me your keys, her keys and go to bed; and please see that someone is sent down to my headquarters for Dr. Hartmann? I shall require his attendance up here, say, in an hour's time."

Having given these orders and received the keys of Frau Dotler and Madame Olshausen's keys brought from her dressing-table, Prince Clement Louis again sat silent a little while, turning many things over in his mind. They were very trivial-looking keys—nothing, as Frau Dotler had explained, was locked up save one cabinet, where the lady kept a few letters (those written by His Highness when they were separated by the vicissitudes of war) and a few of her more precious jewels.

Before he proceeded to use these keys, he looked into the bed-chamber and saw her, by the light of the silver lamp, asleep. It was convenient that she should be asleep, and he always had been able to trust her to do the convenient thing.

He unlocked the brass and tortoise-shell cabinet which the waiting-woman had indicated, and found therein what she had said he would find: letters, his own letters, and a few valuable pieces of jewellery; but he was skillful at careful searching, and acute in his observations; and in a few moments he had found something more than either letters or jewellery. In the flat bottom of the case that held a string of brilliants was a careful copy of the key to his private cipher, short transcripts in French of letters which he had lately sent, and a German version of the Italian despatch he had lately sent in code to Maréchal Monsanto.

No further proof was needed: the woman was exactly what Glückstadt had said she was—what everyone, save himself, had discovered her to be: a spy . . . an adroit professional spy.

The first emotion that Prince Clement Louis felt was amazement at her sheer cleverness—her diabolical cleverness. She must be an educated, accomplished, clever woman, and she had passed herself off on him, who so prided himself on his knowledge of human nature, as an

illiterate fool, and lulled him into an entire carelessness of which she had taken a deadly advantage. He remembered with a chill at his heart the assault on the Nicholas Gate which had so terribly failed; and his artillery train, ambushed and cut to pieces in the morass; and those two other secrets—she knew of them. Had she had a chance to betray them? He did not think so, for her woman had said that she had not left the pavilion for two days. She had lacked a chance. It was clear she employed no messenger—she was too subtle for that . . . probably she went herself to some rendezvous far beyond the lines, and delivered her information to some emissary of the enemy.

He took the papers and destroyed them, replaced the jewellery carefully, and again locked up the brass and tortoise-shell cabinet.

Who was she? Aurora Frey, of the Hanoverian Court? Minetta, of the Italian Comedy? the Baroness Olshausen, of Imperial creation? Who was she? He would not be likely ever to know now, nor did it greatly matter. A spy, and, with that appearance and that skill, worth her light weight in jewels twice over to whoever had the luck to employ her. And through it all she had loved him: he was convinced of that; and he loved her. Somewhere between them was a romantic dream which even this could not spoil; a deep passion which even this could not mar. But he had always been master, both of his dreams and of his passions. Never had they dominated him—nay, not only not dominated, never had they influenced him. . . .

And now, how to get out of this? He had boasted to young Glückstadt, that there was no situation, however complicated and delicate, from which a gentleman of tact and breeding and experience could not extricate himself. He would have to act at once. If he allowed her to-morrow, she would use it to betray him again.

Two more heavy losses. Two more deep blows at his prestige and his pride. Enough to send all those murmuring officers and princes into open revolt. And he had his obligations towards them—already they had suffered profoundly through this woman of his, through his infatuation. Reinforcements must come up and the assault on Mons must be successful.

He passed to the table and gazed at his array of metal soldiers. That triumphal entry into Brussels must not be jeopardized. He could have her arrested and put out of the reach of any further mischief; but to do so would mean to make himself an object of ridicule to all those men whom he considered—nay, whom he knew to be—his inferiors. How they would smile and sneer, even to his face. . . . "We knew—we had to warn you before you noticed it! If Glückstadt hadn't spoken you'd have gone on in your blindness till we were all massacred in our tents. You, who were so impervious to feminine influence! How she took you in! She made such a fool of you that you talked openly in

front of her, flung about your correspondence, even the key to your secret code!"

For the first time in his life he would give these men the opportunity to sneer at him. A great many people had disliked—perhaps hated—him; but so far no one had been able to despise him; and he did not intend to give anyone, now, that excuse.

The way out, then? The boasted tact and fortitude which he had told Glückstadt would help a gentleman out of any difficult situation?

When the doctor arrived from the headquarters at the pavilion in the woods, he found His Serene Highness, still in the brocaded bedgown, seated by the table on which was that imposing array of lead soldiers. A carafe of water and some glasses were beside him, and he handled a rose-coloured phial which appeared to contain scent.

"Your Serene Highness looks extremely pale," remarked the doctor with sympathy.

"You are mistaken," replied Prince Clement Louis. "It is not for myself that I have sent for you, but for Madame Olshausen." And he led the way into the charming bedroom where this lady still lay asleep, and roused her with a pressure of his hand on her bare shoulder.

"She was taken very ill at supper, my dear doctor. I was quite alarmed. A fit of seizure, followed by a great faintness. She has had these attacks before, but never so badly as tonight."

The young woman sat up in bed, surprised and confused to see the doctor standing beside her lover. She appeared to glow not only with youth and beauty but with the uttermost bloom of health; but His Serene Highness remarked coolly:

"You observe, doctor, how she is flushed with fever!"

"Indeed," protested the lady in amaze. "I am perfectly well, and I do not know, Monseigneur, to what you refer."

"It is quite usual," said the doctor, bowing, "for the patient to forget such attacks, madam. Now, if you permit me a prescription."

The Prince interrupted:

"I dare say there will be no need of that, if you think she seems well enough; but I thought I would like you to see her, my dear doctor. And now you are awake, Minetta, perhaps you would like a glass of chicory-water—it is a favourite refreshment of yours, and I have had some freshly prepared."

"I would like it well enough," she said bewildered, "but indeed I do not know what this means! I am perfectly well!"

"I hope," smiled the Prince, "that you do not deceive yourself." And he offered her the glass of water which he had held in his hand since he entered the chamber.

She drank it hastily, and then he urged her to lie down and rest.

"Now the doctor has seen you, I feel more at ease."

The two men went into the outer chamber.

"She seems, Monseigneur," began the doctor respectfully, "in perfect health."

"She is not in perfect health; she is in a very dangerous state," said Prince Clement Louis; "and I must beg you, Dr. Hartmann, to remember it. You will please stay at the pavilion tonight; you may be required again. I have never consulted you for Madame Olshausen's health before, but that is not because I have not been anxious about it, but because she has such a dislike of physicians; but tonight the attack was too severe for me to ignore it."

The doctor bowed, filled with a vague uneasiness, and, smilingly dismissed by His Serene Highness, retired.

Prince Clement Louis returned to the table and the array of soldiers. Nothing would blemish that triumph; no one would be able to sneer at him . . . He put the pink phial carefully in an inner pocket of his brocaded gown. He had several such. They were certain legacies from his mother, who had been devoted to his interests. She had left, besides the phials, a curious reputation in most of the Courts of Europe, not unconcerned with the sudden deaths of notable personalities; whose political interests were opposed to those of her employer; but she had been a great princess and a very beautiful woman.

Looking at the pompous array of soldiers, Prince Clement Louis thought:

"How shall I ever replace Minetta? How shall I ever find anyone so docile and obedient and delicious? And I am sure that she loves me as I love her; it could hardly be otherwise. But dreams and passions must not interfere with more important matters."

What was a mistress compared to a city—or any woman compared to a successful campaign, a triumphal process, and the laurels gilded by the Emperor's gratitude? What was any love-affair, however charming, compared to the respect of his officers and his obligations towards them? Nothing—a grain of dust in the scale.

Everything was silent in the pavilion in the woods. Prince Clement Louis went into the bedchamber of Minetta.

Soon after dawn, the frightened Doctor Hartmann was roused by the Prince himself, standing at his bedside.

"I told you you would probably be needed, doctor. Madame Olshausen is dead. She died suddenly just now, in my arms. An attack like that of last night. And it was over immediately, before I could call assistance."

The doctor, in a panic, began to huddle on his clothes. He noticed that the Prince was partially dressed and seemed perfectly cool and unconcerned, though he was even paler than he had been last night.

"Is Your Highness sure," he stammered, "that the lady is really dead? Some mistake, perhaps—"

"Perfectly sure," said Prince Clement Louis. "There can be no possibility of mistake."

Through the quiet rooms of the pretty little pavilion the two men went to the bedchamber of Madame Olshausen. The sun was already shining in the trees, which pressed quite close to the open windows; and the birds were singing in the pale, light leafage. But in her room the curtains had been drawn.

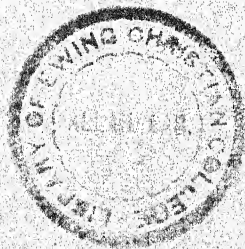
She was certainly dead, in her frivolous laces and ribbons, half-naked in the charming, disarrayed luxury of her coquettish bed; and His Serene Highness, gazing down at her, remarked:

"You see, my dear doctor, I was quite correct in my opinion as to her state of health?"

And the doctor muttered, not caring to look up into the cold, reserved face of the Prince:

"Monseigneur, you were perfectly right."

The attack of Mons was successful. In three days the city fell. The relief coming up under Maréchal d'Orbitello was not ambushed. The pride of the Generalissimo was in no way blown upon. With the death of Madame Olshausen all cause of discontent and complaint was removed. She had a pompous funeral, and he his triumphal entry into Brussels. If his lonely spirit was at times struck by shafts of a surprising agony, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had dealt successfully with a very delicate situation.



MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

This admirable spy story, a little on the "fictional" side, but finely moving and memorable, was discovered in an old magazine by one of my own favorite spies, Mr. Robert Sherman, whose uncanny talent for spotting lost tales—floating in rubber rafts, as it were, on the vast sea of periodical literature—makes me wonder what he would do if he were set the task of finding, say, the "lost tales of Miletus." But our combined genius has been unequal to the task of discovering anything whatever about Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, the author of our story. One brilliant deduction, based on a hyphen, is that he is an Englishman, my dear Watson; and there is of course the evidence of the story itself to bear us out. It's a good story anyway, fast-moving and original, simple and sensitive, told with mounting suspense and a warm sympathy for the man called Kurt von Kelnitz. This last is a little unusual, perhaps, since spies are sympathetic characters, as a rule, only when they are on one's own side.

THE ROAD WITHOUT TURNING

THE TWO MEN were somewhat similar in appearance, both rangily built and tall. But the German looked the professional soldier. Kurt von Kelnitz always sat erect in his chair like a *feldwebel* and wore his *feld-grau* as though he had been poured into it. On the other hand the Britisher behind the desk slouched in his khaki with that elaborate carelessness which gives an English officer the air of having donned the uniform only recently and of being willing to doff it as quickly.

"What a heavy-footed fellow that sentry is," complained von Kelnitz, breaking the silence which had lain between these two for a minute or more. The British officer nodded and the two of them listened, their faces turned toward the corridor just beyond the door. Out there a sentinel walked his post. His footfalls receded thirty paces down the hall, where he made an about-face and returned, the solid clump of his ammunition boots growing steadily louder until he passed the door. From the courtyard at the far end of the corridor there came the crash of grounded arms and the staccato challenge and reply as the midnight guard went through the centuries' old custom of the Transfer of the

Keys. Both men glanced at the clock, the British officer furtively, the German calmly. Again silence fell between them. The German's voice broke it at last.

"It's a picturesque old place, this Tower of London," said the German, and there came a glint of amusement in his eyes, "picturesque, ancient and outmoded, like your creaky old British Empire, Dick."

The Englishman, Major Richard Fortescue smiled.

"Remember the big argument we had at the Embassy in Berlin before the war about schnapps and Scotch whiskey, Kurt?"

The German officer removed his monocle from his eye and twisted it about between fingers and thumb.

"Will I ever forget the headache that next morning! Ach! Du lieber Gott! It felt as though it had been hit by a battering ram, that head!"

"You were a lieutenant of Uhlans then, Kurt. And as I remember it you were sweet on a French girl visiting the French Embassy. What became of that romance, or have you forgotten it?"

The German shook his head.

"No," he said quietly, "I have not forgotten it. I married the lady." The deuce you say!" returned the Britisher, his eyebrows raised in surprise, "how . . . what . . . did you marry her before the war?"

"No, I married her after the war started."

"That must have been complicated. Tell me about it, Kurt," and he handed the German his cigar case. Kurt von Kelnitz selected one of the cigars, bowed slightly, lighted it and took a long puff before replying.

"As you say, it was very complicated. In the first place there was the fact that she hated my country and in the second place there was the code of our German Corps of Officers which forbade a man of my caste to marry an enemy woman. But that was not all," and the German flicked the white ash from the end of his cigar and stared at the glowing tip. Major Fortescue glanced at the clock furtively, looking quickly away again. He cleared his throat.

"Tell me about it from the beginning. You have never told me your experiences at the commencement of the war and I have often wondered if you got into action with your Uhlans."

Kurt von Kelnitz needed little urging. Yes, he had led his Uhlans into battle. His regiment was one of the first ordered to the French frontier.

He had felt exceedingly joyous that day when word came at last ordering them across the frontier. They had crossed the border with the entire regiment singing.

Kurt was only a lieutenant then, but he had absolute confidence in his platoon of some twenty-four lances. They carried the tubular steel lance, and this was at the beginning of the war when all the Uhlans

wore the flat topped, black leather uhlan's, the distinctive Uhlan head-gear. They were well-mounted, his men, on sleek Hanoverian horses, standing fifteen-two hands high, the least of them. The cavalry orders were to work in coöperation with the machine guns and the armored motor cars, and that he did not like, for he wanted an opportunity to lead his platoon thundering against the enemy with the *armes blanches*.

For the first few kilometers they saw no sign of the French, and reasoned that the enemy forces had been withdrawn from the frontier. Kurt's platoon was flung out as a scouting force in the advance. He trotted them along the road and through the woods, passing through the cobbled streets of gray stone villages whose inhabitants remained concealed behind shuttered windows. Despite the thrilling sense of adventure that possessed him, the silence and the deserted appearance of the country-side oppressed him as something slightly sinister. Moreover, he was worried about his fiancée. Somewhere not far to the right of the line upon which he was marching lay the chateau of Sevrey-sur-Aisne where Mademoiselle Odette de Sevrey lived with her younger brother, the Vicomte de Sevrey, whom Kurt had never met. They had become engaged after a swift courtship in Berlin where she had been the guest of her uncle, the French Military Attaché. After her departure, he and Odette had written back and forth several times a week until the war situation had grown menacing and his letters suddenly went unanswered.

What troubled Kurt was the fact that the chateau of Sevrey-sur-Aisne lay right in the path of the enormous German thrust toward Paris.

Despite this, he could not help thrilling to the feeling that he was an integral part of that thrust. To his right and left, as far as he could see, other squadrons were breaking out of the woods and crossing the fields and sweeping onward in a wave of horsemen. Behind him the earth trembled to the clank and heave of great guns and the tramp of hordes of infantry. The Fatherland was on the march.

Glancing at his map he noted that the road he was following would eventually take him within two or three kilometers of the chateau de Sevrey-sur-Aisne. In the late afternoon an action developed somewhere off at the left, and for the first time he heard the thud and smash of artillery in action. He found his men listening gravely to the sound, all of them soberly elated. A few minutes later, after throwing out pickets, he halted the platoon and watered horses at an inn whose frightened landlord served his men with good red wine and bread which they ate and drank with their sausage. The fighting on the left died down.

Toward dusk there were sporadic bursts of rifle fire, but nothing of any consequence. That night they bivouacked in an abandoned mill and fed their horses from the sacks of grain. The lieutenant inspected

his outposts between dawn and daylight. It was when he was approaching the outpost he had placed to the right of the village that he was brought up short by a sharp challenge:

"*Wer da?*" growled the sentry, and Kurt heard the snick of a breech bolt. He had placed no sentry here, and after identifying himself strode up to the man. It was Private Klimtsig out of the third section.

"Why art thou running all over the place, *du Äsel?*" he stormed.

"*Bitte, Herr Leutnant . . .*" stammered Klimtsig, "but there is something wrong at the post at the edge of the woods. I heard a groan come from there and they do not answer when we call."

The lieutenant drew his Luger and ran toward the point. It was dark on the edge of the woods and he snapped on his flashlight. Its beam showed him two bodies sprawled on the ground. The two Uhalns, Schultz and Willer, had their throats cut from ear to ear.

The platoon was silent when they heard the news, and they went on the next morning with a new spirit of hatred amongst them. Plainly, it had been the work of *francs-tireurs*, the same as the armed civilians who had prowled about the armies of 1870. The lieutenant registered a vow that it would go badly with any civilians he found with arms in their hands.

With a few brushes with a small patrol of enemy cavalry to enliven the next day, they went on, dropping back once into the regimental support and being sent forward again. The fighting now grew heavier in the north and raged all of one day and far into the night until word came that the French and English had been driven back.

About this time the lieutenant was growing anxious for a sight of that chateau which sheltered his fiancée. Fortunately his regiment shifted its sector toward the right and at last he found himself leading his platoon to the Aisne River, crossing below the village and chateau of Sevrey-sur-Aisne. From several kilometers away he saw the tall, gray stone towers of the chateau with their conical pointed roofs rising above the village. His heart skipped a beat or two. He was riding through a scattering of houses at the edge of a stone quarry on the far bank of the Aisne, his scouts well forward and to the flank, but as he passed the mouth of the quarry he heard the crack of a rifle from the edge of the woods to the right of the road not three hundred meters away. Almost simultaneously with the rifle's crack he heard a grunt behind him and turned to find his *feldwebel* staring stupidly at his left side. Something dark was spreading over his tunic.

"If it is permitted to speak . . . Herr . . . Leutnant . . ." and suddenly with a horrified look in his eyes the *feldwebel* swayed out of his saddle and slumped heavily to the ground. His horse snorted and reared aside.

Someone caught the frightened animal while Kurt waving to his men to follow, galloped toward the point whence the shot had come. His men crashed into the trees on either side of him as he rode through. There was no trace of anyone in the woods and no sign of a living thing until he leaped his horse out on the far side of the woods at the edge of a slightly sunken road which bordered the field. Here he came upon three of his men surrounding a young Frenchman with a bicycle. At the lieutenant's shout the Uhlans gave back and one of them dismounted quickly and searched the Frenchman. There was no weapon upon him. Suddenly the memory of that agonized look in the feldwebel's eyes rose up in Kurt's mind. With it came a memory of his two Uhlans with their throats cut. Something like a red mist enveloped him and he felt his temples throbbing. As from a distance he heard his voice issuing commands.

A section of the Uhlans dismounted swiftly, dragging their carbines from their boots. An *Unteroffizier* was binding the youth's hands behind him and backing him against a tree. There was an unreal and dreamlike air about the whole thing. The young Frenchman looked up at the sky and around at the trees and the lieutenant remembered strangely enough, the beauty of that summer afternoon and knew what the man before him was thinking.

It was all over so swiftly that the lieutenant scarce knew what had happened and he stared rather stupidly at the huddled body at the foot of the tree and felt his ear drums still ringing to the crash of the volley. Like some detached spectator he watched while the *Unteroffizier* placed his pistol to the ear of the fallen youth and fired the "mercy shot." Mechanically he reached for the articles that the officer had removed from the pockets of the slain youth. There were three or four letters, a small morocco notebook, a sterling silver cigarette case and a monogrammed handkerchief.

Leaving the body to lie where it fell, he led his men back to the road and resumed his march toward the river crossing.

Picking his way through the village he led his platoon up the hill toward the chateau and arrived to find the great iron gates locked and bolted while the two carved stone lions stared down indifferently. Peering through the iron bars he could see people scurrying here and there beyond the moat. There seemed to be many people about, both in the courtyard and in the park.

It was his *Unteroffizier* who hammered on the gate with his lance butt until a white-faced and trembling concierge nervously unlocked and flung wide the iron portals.

The lieutenant rode in first, looking eagerly for a sight of his fiancée,

but there was no one in view except a nervous *valet-à-pied* who stood by the great door in livery and knee breeches.

The lieutenant dismounted and strode through the entrance hall, carrying his sabre under his arm.

It was a stately hall in which he found himself, with its white marble staircase stretching up to the right and great doors opening into a marble-floored salon on the left. He caught an instant glimpse of portraits and statues lining the walls before he heard a light footstep on the stairs.

Turning, he looked up and saw her standing there above him. He took a single quick step forward, his hands outstretched, but dropped them to his sides and stood very straight as she came slowly down the last few steps and stood before him. Clicking his heels and bowing low from the waist, he waited for her to speak.

"I had thought, Kurt, to welcome you to the chateau under happier circumstances than this," she said, and her voice was low and full of pain.

"This war that has come between our countries," he said, "must it come between us?" But she made no reply to this, only swayed a little on her feet as though faint; and then there was a clatter and a racket in the courtyard and he stood at attention and saluted as several staff officers and the brigade general strode briskly in.

His squadron was assigned to guard this headquarters and for the next few days he was on duty at the chateau. For it was after his arrival here that the first check to the German advance had come.

At any rate the lull gave him time to see his fiancée and to attempt to win her to his way of thinking. She was horribly distressed, for her younger brother whom she adored had disappeared the day the Uhlans had arrived. She was distraught with worry over this and he set out to comfort her and to win her over to the idea of an immediate marriage. For, as he had told her, the chateau was doomed and there was no safety for her there. She might much better marry him and return to his home where she would be safe behind the lines. She demurred hotly at this, having no wish to be a lone French woman amidst hostile Germans, and they compromised upon Switzerland.

Here the British officer interrupted him:

"And do you mean to say that she actually agreed to marry you, Kurt? That's most extraordinary! How do you account for it?"

"How?" the German officer shrugged his shoulders and there was observable the faintest reflection of a complacent smile which was erased as quickly as it showed itself, "How? In the first place it was war, and from time immemorial women have resigned themselves to being the spoils of war. In the second place we were deeply in love, and it takes more than a war to change that, and in the third place her world was

crashing in ruins about her, and I was the only man to whom she could turn. No, Dick, it was not surprising."

And so they were married by the regimental chaplain and by the mayor of the village who was routed out from hiding to perform the ceremony, and a strange ceremony it was, by candlelight in the marble hall, with the faces of her ancestors staring down from the walls and the officers of the staff and of the regiment grouped about in their field grey.

"And your colonel and your officer corps made no objection?" asked the Englishman curiously.

"Nein," the German shook his head, "she was very beautiful and that they understood, also she was nobly born," he answered.

The time was short, for the regiment was to march at midnight and he said good-bye to her from the saddle two hours later and rode into the darkness, leaving her behind with her promise that she would make her way to Paris and from thence to Switzerland where she would write him.

And write she did, for her letters came to him down in front of Amiens and out to East Prussia where he was sent for several exciting months and back again to the solemn corridors of the Greater General Staff building in Berlin where he was put on duty in the Intelligence section. It was known to his chiefs that he had spent many years in England and it was evident that he looked more English than German, and he could pass anywhere for a upper class Britisher. These things made it almost foreordained that he should be picked for important espionage duty when the need became great.

And that need became great a month or two before the battle of Cambrai. Word had filtered through to the Greater General Staff that the British were experimenting with some new instrument of war. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Three higher officers one after the other had failed to discover any information of these new instruments until at last one day the lieutenant, now promoted to Rittmeister, was called in by the chief of his bureau and given orders to prepare to go in disguise and find out what was behind these rumors.

"My word," interrupted the British officer, "you had rumors about the tanks that far ahead?"

"Sicher, surely," returned Kurt, selecting a fresh cigar. There was the tramp of feet in the corridor and the eyes of the British officer slid quickly around to the clock again. The German officer stared at it as well. It was four A. M., the time for the third relief to go on post. There was the clatter of grounded arms, the low question and answer of the relieved and the relieving sentinel, the crisp orders of the Cor-

poral of the Guard and the old relief marched away while the new sentinel began his unhurried, steady-footed march up and down the corridor.

Sicher, it was to find out about those *verdammte* tanks that he, a baron and a Rittmeister of a proud regiment of Uhlans was to be sent forth like any common spy. And here Kurt von Kelnitz quoted a sonorous German saying:

"*Vorwaerts musst du, denn rückwaerts kannst du jetzt nicht mehr!* Forward you must go, for backward you can no longer turn." Besides that, his duty was to obey orders and it was for the Fatherland. Moreover, and here was a grain of satisfaction, his route led him through Switzerland, and he would have an opportunity to spend a few days with his bride.

"*Zu Befehl! Herr Oberst!*" he had clicked his heels and saluted and gone forth to make his preparations. Two days later he was with his wife. Ach, the loveliness of those four days by the lake, and here Kurt von Kelnitz quoted Schiller and became absent-minded until the ash of his cigar dropped to his knee and brought him back to the present. She was beautiful and gracious and lovely and those few hours stolen from the war passed all too quickly. With her he left his suitcase containing his feld-grau and his decorations, all except one—the *Ordre pour le Mérite* which he wore on a ribbon around his neck.

"Kurt, you didn't tell me that you had won the *Ordre pour le Mérite*," interrupted Major Fortescue.

"*Sicher*, surely, placed around my neck by the *kaiserliche königliche Majestät* Himself," answered the German composedly, and went on with his story, neglecting to state how he had won the highest decoration that a German officer can receive.

His wife clung to him when he left making him promise to write frequently and he gave his word of honor as a German officer to write at least once a week. He was provided by his chiefs with an American passport under the name of Thomas Spaulding and it was agreed between them that he should write his letters to her addressed to Mrs. Thomas Spaulding in Geneva.

There was little difficulty in getting out of Switzerland and into France, for the German Secret Service "underground railway" was extremely efficient. He spent a day idling on the boulevards of Paris, sitting at the *Café de la Paix* where two or three people chatted with him of seemingly inconsequential matters before he departed for Boulogne. He underwent a rigorous examination from both British and French authorities at Boulogne, but his papers were perfect and there was little suspicion attached to traveling Americans at this time. So complete had been the preparations made for him that his English

accent was ascribed to Boston and he was provided with a fraternity pin and letters which purported to show that he was a graduate A.B. of Harvard College. Upon arrival in London he got in touch immediately with the chief of the German espionage system in Great Britain and lunched openly with him at Berkeleys and dined and danced with one of his assistants, a very beautiful woman, at the Savoy and at Ciro's. It was at the former place that he had a narrow escape, for one of the big footmen in knee breeches and silk stockings showed signs of recognizing him. In spite of the fact that in former days he had handed the footman many a shilling tip in exchange for his hat and stick he managed to look through and beyond the fellow with an assumption of indifference that convinced the footman that he had made a mistake. After that close shave Rittmeister von Kelnitz, who was Mr. Thomas Spaulding of Boston, U. S. A., ran no further risks of that nature by appearing at his former haunts.

It was after his third or fourth day in London that a vague uneasiness began to descend upon him and he found himself filled with a species of jumpy, nervous watchfulness for which he could not account. He feared that it was some sixth sense trying to warn him that he had been discovered and was being watched. It was nothing tangible, but there constantly grew on him the feeling that he was being shadowed. He sought to shake it off by changing lodgings and for a few hours would succeed in finding a little surcease from the nervous strain, only to have it recur. He took to glancing behind him as he walked through the crowded streets, but in no case was he able to pick out any one individual who seemed to be shadowing him. While he was there in London the chief of the German Espionage Service in Great Britain informed him that three of his most trusted agents had been arrested and removed within a week. This did not increase Kurt's store of confidence and he found himself growing heartily sick of his task, anxious to be done with it. Many and many a time he sighed for the cheerful jingle and steady thud of his squadron of Uhlans trotting behind him.

He waited anxiously for a letter from his wife in response to his own letter informing her that he had arrived safely. Her reply came at last but it did not succeed in cheering him, for it sounded strained and cold and perfunctory. It might have been, he reasoned, that his soul was too filled with sorrow, too overburdened with the anguish of loneliness and worry for any letter from her to succeed in cheering him up and he might have been over sensitive. But at any rate he felt more depressed after her letter than before.

Another letter from her came before he left London and this was couched in the same strained and perfunctory fashion, so that he grew a little alarmed and wondered what might have happened to have chilled her. In casting over possibilities the thought of that uniform of

feld-grau he had left in her charge returned to plague him. It occurred to him that she might have found something in the pockets that had upset her. But he had little time to speculate on these matters, for the information he had been seeking had come in volume enough to permit him to make his next move.

In other words he had found out that the strange new weapons of war were actually in being and were reported present somewhere on Salisbury Plain. It was said that they were being tried out there behind a great wall of secrecy and heavy cordons of guards. There was nothing for him to do then but to go to Salisbury Plain and attempt to discover the secret.

Of course he knew that he was followed, and cold fear clutched his heart at the outset. But "*Vorwaerts musst du, denn rückwaerts kannst du, jetzt nicht mehr!*" He must keep going forward, for he could no longer turn back.

It sufficed that he won his way to the camp in Salisbury Plain and saw those huge oblong steel boxes on peculiar caterpillar treads as they came lurching and grinding out of their sheds. As they waddled past his hiding place he swiftly noted detail after detail of their construction and armament, information of vital importance to the German army.

After incredible difficulties he made his way back to London and came to the small hotel from which he could get word to his chiefs.

But as he stepped into the entrance hall of the hotel a heavy hand dropped on his shoulder. He was swung about and felt the cold steel of handcuffs clicking into place over his wrists.

"So that's my story, Dick," concluded von Kelnitz, grinding out the remnants of his cigar. "What puzzles me is how your people captured me so quickly. How soon after my arrival in London did they know of my presence?"

"About two days, Kurt," returned Major Fortescue gravely.

"And you shadowed me every moment thereafter?"

"No, not every moment, I must admit we lost you from the time you left that motor car near Salisbury Plain until the time you hailed the char-à-banc that carried you back to London."

"That char-à-banc had one of your men aboard?" asked the German.

"It had a group of our men aboard. It had been cruising up and down looking for you for twelve hours."

"That was very keen work," said the German admiringly, "but I still can't understand how you originally permeated my disguise."

"Oh, there were any number of ways," returned the Britisher non-committally. His eyes were a little haggard as he glanced at the clock whose hour hand pointed to five A. M. His ears were strained listening to a sound which stirred in the courtyard, a sound compounded of the crash of grounded arms and the answering of men to a roll call.

"Yes, Dick," said Kurt von Kelnitz, quietly, "the time is very short. I cannot tell you how I appreciate your kindness in all that you have done for me, especially in sending for my uniform. Do you suppose my wife will understand why I wanted it?"

"I don't believe so, Kurt," said the Britisher gently. The German nodded, satisfied, and then a slight frown gathered on his forehead.

"Do you know Dick, that this uniform explained a little to me why my wife's letters were strained and perfunctory?"

The Britisher looked up swiftly.

"Yes," continued von Kelnitz, "I told you, if you remember, that I feared she might find some letters in the pockets. Those letters were in the pocket when I left the uniform with her. And now the letters are no longer there."

"Have you been carrying on an affair with someone else, Kurt?"

The German shook his head gravely.

"No, nothing like that, but those letters and a morocco notebook I had carried since that day when I ordered the execution of the young Frenchman near the bridge at Sevrey-sur-Aisne. They were the letters and the notebook that were taken from the pockets of the dead man."

The Britisher stared at him.

"You see, Dick, the letters belonged to him and were addressed with his name and the notebook contained notes in his own handwriting."

"And the name?" asked the Britisher.

"The letters were addressed to the Vicomte Raoul de Sevrey—the brother that she worshiped."

A silence fell in the room. It was broken at last by Kurt von Kelnitz's voice.

"So you see Dick, it's pretty much of a mess all around. I lied to her about her brother's death in an effort to make her happy, but now she has discovered the truth and I pass out of her life leaving hatred behind. I could not make her happy, Dick, and she is pure gold!"

There was pain on von Kelnitz's features and the Britisher looked away, his eyes haggard.

Suddenly both men raised their heads. For a second they stared into each other's eyes. There was panic in the eyes of the Britisher but nothing but cool acceptance of Fate in the eyes of the German. A sound was coming into the courtyard. The sound grew in volume and resolved itself into the steady disciplined tramp of many feet.

The Britisher's face went white. Kurt von Kelnitz nodded quietly.

"You have been good to me, my friend," he said simply, and rose as there came an order to halt and the crash of grounded arms outside the door, "I've only one thing more to ask of you, Dick, and that is that you will send this," and he jerked a ribbon from which hung a decoration from the inside of his blouse and laid it on the table, "that

you will send my *Ordre pour le Merite* to Odette. Her address is Mrs. Thomas Spaulding, Number thirteen Bahnhof Strasse, Geneva. Will you do this?"

"Of course, Kurt," whispered the Englishman. Both men were standing as the door opened.

Kurt von Kelnitz extended his hand. The Britisher took it. Of the two he was the more unnerved.

"By God, Kurt . . . I'm sorry . . . it's rotten luck . . . I'd rather . . ." something like a sob choked his utterance.

"It is nothing, my friend. Forget it. Good-bye and thank you." And Kurt von Kelnitz, Rittmeister of Uhlans and Baron and Freiherr of the Kingdom of Prussia, convicted spy, clicked his heels and bowed stiffly from his waist. He strode briskly to the door, where an officer, a chaplain, and the guard stood ready to conduct him to the firing squad that even now was waiting at an angle of the courtyard wall.

After what seemed an eternity of silence there came the dull sound the Britisher had dreaded. For a long time he sat staring silently at the wall.

"Poor old Kurt! What a beastly business!" he whispered to himself at last and reached with a hand that trembled into the drawer of the desk. He brought forth a long, official envelope that contained the papers relating to Kurt von Kelnitz. From among these he pulled a faintly scented square of notepaper. It was inscribed in spidery characters and in clear and careful English it denounced Kurt von Kelnitz as a German spy, told the name under which he was hiding and the place where he might be found. The envelope was postmarked Switzerland, the return address was 13 Bahnhof Strasse. It was signed "Odette de Sevrej."

"What a beastly mess!" repeated the Britisher, his face weary-looking as he drew forth another envelope from the drawer of his desk, "and how rotten sorry she'll be if she ever discovers the truth!"

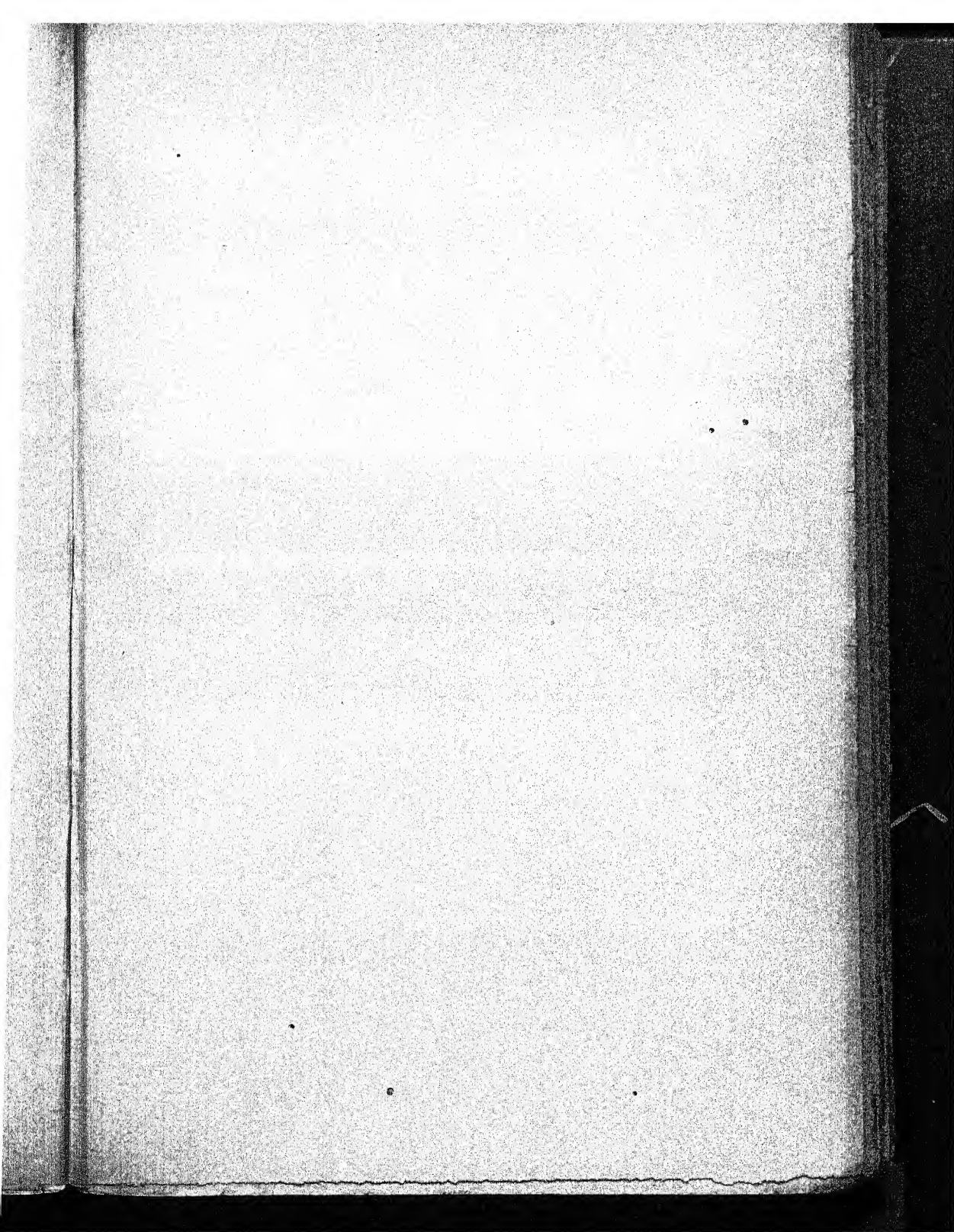
And again he read that report of the French *Sûreté* upon the Vicomte Raoul de Sevrej.

"Disappeared at the time of the first German crossing of the Aisne. Later discovered to have forcibly exchanged clothing with a French peasant youth. Later reported in Belgium. In June of 1916, was arrested, tried and convicted of being a spy in German pay. Executed at Fort Vincennes July 30th, 1916, as a traitor to France. Information secret and confidential. Relatives not notified."

The Britisher stared at the coldly official wording of the document.

"What a beastly mess!" he repeated.

Out in the courtyard a man with a mop and pail cleaned up some stains. The members of the firing squad, as was the custom, were excused from all other duties for the day.



G. K. CHESTERTON

Here is another name famous in literature. When Gilbert K. Chesterton died, in 1936, England (and the world) lost one of its greatest men of letters. "A man of colossal genius," George Bernard Shaw called him, and it was a genius that carried Chesterton restlessly into nearly every department of literature; he was an imposing essayist, novelist, poet, theologian, controversialist, and historian. His best book perhaps, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, a masterpiece, is a blend of his bewildering talent in all those fields, and one of the finest detective stories ever written; but probably he is most widely loved for his world-famous character *Father Brown*, the little Catholic priest who is second to no detective in the land of make-believe. Chesterton created many remarkable figures of fiction, among them an unusual gentleman named Mr. Pond, with whom our story is concerned. In this adventure, Mr. Pond, a British secret agent of superhuman discernment, finds one of his assistants murdered for a set of plans—yes, the grand old situation of the uncommunicative dead man and the "papers." But in Chesterton's philosophy you will find it a rather different story.

A TALL STORY

THEY HAD BEEN discussing the new troubles in Germany: the three old friends, Sir Hubert Wotton, the famous official; Mr. Pond, the obscure official; and Captain Gahagan, who never did a stroke of work in the way of putting pen to paper, but liked making up the most fantastic stories on the spur of the moment. On this occasion, however, the group was increased to four; for Gahagan's wife was present, a candid-looking young woman with light-brown hair and dark-brown eyes. They had only just recently been married; and the presence of Joan Gahagan still stimulated the Captain to rather excessive flights of showing-off.

Captain Gahagan looked like a Regency buck; Mr. Pond looked like a round-eyed fish, with the beard and brow of Socrates; Sir Hubert Wotton looked like Sir Hubert Wotton—it summed up a very sound and virile quality in him, for which his friends had a great respect.

"It's an infernal shame," Wotton was saying, "the way these fellows have treated the Jews: perfectly decent and harmless Jews, who were no more Communists than I am; little men who'd worked their way up by merit and industry, all kicked out of their posts without a penny of compensation. Surely you agree with that, Gahagan?"

"Of course I do," replied Gahagan. "I never kicked a Jew. I can distinctly remember three and a half occasions on which I definitely refrained from doing so. As for all those hundreds and thousands of poor little fiddlers and actors and chess-players, I think it was a damned shame that they should be kicked out or kicked at all. But I fancy they must be kicking themselves, for having been so faithful to Germany and even, everywhere else, pretty generally pro-German."

"Even that can be exaggerated," said Mr. Pond. "Do you remember the case of Carl Schiller, that happened during the War? It was all kept rather quiet, as I have reason to know; for the thing happened, in some sense, in my department. I have generally found spy stories the dulllest of all forms of detective fiction; in my own modest researches into the light literature of murder, I invariably avoid them. But this story really did have an unexpected and rather astonishing ending. Of course, you know that in wartime the official dealing with these things is very much exposed to amateurs, as the Duke of Wellington was exposed to authors. We persecuted the spies; and the spy-maniacs persecuted us. They were always coming to us to say they had seen certain persons who looked like spies. We vainly assured them that spies do not look like spies. As a matter of fact, the enemy was pretty ingenious in keeping the really suspicious character just out of sight; sometimes by his being ordinary; sometimes actually by his being extraordinary; one would be too small to be noticed, another too tall to be seen; one was apparently paralysed in a hospital and got out of the window at night—"

Joan looked across at him with a troubled expression in her honest brown eyes.

"Please, Mr. Pond, do tell us what you mean by a man being too tall to be seen."

Gahagan's spirits, already high, soared into laughter and light improvisation.

"These things do happen, my dear girl," he said. "I can throw out a thousand instances that would meet the case. Take, for example, the case of my unfortunate friends the Balham-Browns who lived at Muswell Hill. Mr. Balham-Brown had just come home from the office (of the Imperial and International Lead-Piping Company) and was exercising the lawn-mower in the usual manner, when he noticed in the grass a growth not green but reddish-brown and resembling animal hair; nay, even human hair. My friend Mr. Pond, whose private collection of Giant Whiskers is unrivalled (except of course, by the unique collection of Sir Samuel Snodd) was able to identify it with the long hair of the Anakin; and judged by its vigour, the son of Anák was buried but still alive. With the spitefulness of the scientific world, Professor Pooter countered with the theory that Jupiter buried the Titans, one under Etna, another under Ossa, and a third under Muswell Hill. Anyhow,

the villa of my ill-fated friends the Balham-Browns was ruined, and the whole suburb overturned as by an earthquake, in order to excavate the monster. When his head alone emerged, it was like a colossal sphinx; and Mrs. Balham-Brown complained to the authorities that the face frightened her, because it was too large. Mr. Pond, who happened to be passing at the moment, immediately produced a paradox (of which he always carries a small supply) and said that, on the contrary, they would soon find that the face was too small. To cut a long story short——

"Or a tall story shorter," said Joan in a trenchant manner.

"When the Titan was extricated, he was so tall that by the common converging laws of perspective, his head in the remote sky was a mere dot. It was impossible to discern or recall one feature of that old familiar face. He strode away; and fortunately decided to walk across the Atlantic, where even he was apparently submerged. It is believed that the unfortunate creature was going to give lectures in America; driven by that mysterious instinct which leads any person who is notorious for any reason to adopt that course."

"Well, have you done?" demanded Joan. "We know all about you and your yarns; and they don't mean anything. But when Mr. Pond says that somebody was too tall to be seen, he does mean something. And what can he possibly mean?"

"Well," said Mr. Pond, coughing slightly, "it was really a part of the story to which I was alluding just now. I did not notice anything odd about the expression when I used it; but I recognize, on second thought, that it is, perhaps, a phrase requiring explanation." And he proceeded, in his slightly pedantic way to narrate the story which is now retold here.

It all happened in a fashionable watering-place, which was also a famous seaport, and, therefore, naturally a place of concentration for all the vigilance against spies, whether official or amateur. Sir Hubert Wotton was in general charge of the district, but Mr. Pond was in more practical though private occupation of the town, watching events from a narrow house in a back street, an upper room of which had been unobtrusively turned into an office; and he had two assistants under him; a sturdy and very silent young man named Butt, bull-necked and broad-shouldered, but quite short; and a much taller and more talkative and elegant government-office clerk named Travers, but referred to by nearly everybody as Arthur. The stalwart Butt commonly occupied a desk on the ground floor, watching the door and anyone who entered it; while Arthur Travers worked in the office upstairs, where there were some very valuable State papers, including the only plan of the mines in the harbour.

Mr. Pond himself always spent several hours in the office, but he had more occasion than the others to pay visits in the town, and had a general grasp of the neighbourhood. It was a very shabby neighbourhood; indeed, it consisted of a few genteel, old-fashioned houses, now mostly shuttered and empty, standing on the very edge of a sort of slum of small houses, at that time riddled with what is called Unrest in a degree very dangerous, especially in time of war. Immediately outside his door, he found but few things that could be called features in that featureless street; but there was an old curiosity shop opposite, with a display of ancient Asiatic weapons; and there was Mrs. Hartog-Haggard next door, more alarming than all the weapons of the world.

Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was one of those persons, to be found here and there, who look like the conventional caricature of the spinster, though they are in fact excellent mothers of families. Rather in the same way she looked very like the sort of lady who is horribly in earnest at Pacifist meetings; yet, as a matter of fact, she was passionately patriotic, not to say militaristic. And, indeed, it is often true that those two extremes lend themselves to the same sort of fluent fanaticism. Poor Mr. Pond had reason to remember the woeful day when he first saw her angular and agitated figure darkening his doorway as she entered out of the street, peering suspiciously through her curious square spectacles. There was apparently some slight delay about her entrance; some repairs were being done to the porch and some loose board or pole was not removed sufficiently promptly from her path: was, in fact, as she declared, removed reluctantly and in a grumbling spirit by the workmen employed on the job; and by the time she had reached the responsible official, a theory had fully formed and hardened in her mind.

"That man is a Socialist, Mr. Pond," she declared in the ear of that unfortunate functionary. "I heard him with my own ears mutter something about what his Trade Union would say. What is he doing so near to your office?"

"We must distinguish," said Mr. Pond. "A Trade Unionist, even a militant Trade Unionist, is not necessarily a Socialist; a Socialist is not necessarily a Pacifist, still less a Pro-German. In my opinion, the chief S.D.F. men are the most extreme Marxians in England; and they are all out for the Allies. One of the Dock Strike leaders is in a mood to make recruiting speeches all over the Empire."

"I'm sure he's not English; he doesn't look a bit English," said the lady, still thinking of her wicked proletarian without.

"Thank you, Mrs. Hartog-Haggard," said Pond, patiently. "I will certainly make a note of your warning and see that inquiries are made about it."

And so he did, with the laborious precision of one who could not leave

any loophole unguarded. Certainly the man did not look very English; though perhaps rather Scandinavian than German. His name was Peterson: it was possible that it was really Petersen. But that was not all. Mr. Pond had learned the last lesson of the wise man: that the fool is sometimes right.

He soon forgot the incident in the details of his work; and next day it was with a start that he looked up from his desk, or rather from Mr. Butt's desk which he was using at the moment, and saw once again the patriotic lady hovering like an avenging shadow in the doorway. This time she glided swiftly in, unchecked by any Socialist barricade, and warned him that she had news of the most terrible kind. She seemed to have forgotten all about her last suspicions; and, in truth, her new ones were naturally more important to her. This time she had warned the viper on her own hearth. She had suddenly become conscious of the existence of her own German governess, whom she had never especially noticed before. Pond himself had noticed the alien in question with rather more attention; he had seen her, a dumpy lady with pale hair, returning with Mrs. Hartog-Haggard's three little girls and one little boy from the pantomime of Puss-in-Boots that was being performed on the pier. He had even heard her instructing her charges, and saying something educational about a folk-tale; and had smiled faintly at that touch of Teutonic pedantry that talks about a folk-tale when we would talk about a fairy-tale. But he knew a good deal about the lady; and saw no reason to move in the matter.

"She shuts herself up for hours in her room and won't come out," Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was already breathing hoarsely in his ear. "Do you think she is signalling, or does she climb down the fire-escape? What do you think it means, Mr. Pond?"

"Hysterics," said Mr. Pond. "What, do you think the poor lady cannot be hysterical, because she does not scream the house down? But any doctor will tell you that hysteria is mostly secretive and silent. And there really is a vein of hysteria in a great many of the Germans; it is at the very opposite extreme to the external excitability of the Latins. No, madam, I do not think she is climbing down the fire-escape. I think she is saying that her pupils do not love her, and thinking about *welt-schmerz* and suicide. And really, poor woman, she is in a very hard position."

"She won't come to family prayers," continued the patriotic matron, not to be turned from her course, "because we pray for a British victory."

"You had better pray," said Mr. Pond, "for all the unhappy Englishwomen stranded in Germany by poverty or duty or dependence. If she loves her native land, it only shows she is a human being. If she ex-

presses it by ostentatious absences or sulks or banging doors, that may show she is too much of a German. It also shows she is not much of a German spy."

Here again, however, Mr. Pond was careful not to ignore or entirely despise the warning; he kept an eye on the German governess, and even engaged that learned lady in talk upon some trivial pretext—if anything she touched could remain trivial.

"Your study of our national drama," he said gravely, "must sometimes recall to you the greatest and noblest work that ever came out of Germany."

"You refer to Goethe's *Faust*, I presume," she replied.

"I refer to Grimm's *Fairy Tales*," said Mr. Pond. "I fear I have forgotten for the moment whether the story we call *Puss-in-Boots* exists in Grimm's collection in the same form; but I am pretty certain there is some variant of it. It always seems to me about the best story in the world."

The German governess obliged him with a short lecture on the parallelism of folk-lore; and Pond could not help feeling faintly amused at the idea of this ethnological and scientific treatment of a folk-tale which had just been presented on the pier by Miss Patsy Pickles, in tights and various other embellishments, supported by that world-famed comedian who called himself Alberto Tizzi and was born in the Blackfriars Road.

When he returned to his office at twilight, and, turning, beheld the figure of Mrs. Hartog-Haggard again hovering without, Mr. Pond began to think he was in a nightmare. He wondered wildly whether she had drawn some dark conclusions from his own meeting with the Teutonic teacher of youth. Perhaps he, Mr. Pond, was a German spy, too. But he ought to have known his neighbour better; for when Mrs. Hartog-Haggard spoke she had once again forgotten, for the moment, her last cause of complaint. But she was more excited than ever; she ducked under the frame of scaffolding and darted into the room, crying out as she came:

"Mr. Pond, do you know what is right opposite your own house?"

"Well, I think so," said Mr. Pond, doubtfully, "more or less."

"I never read the name over the shop before!" cried the lady. "You know it is all dark and dirty and obliterated—that curiosity shop, I mean; with all the spears and daggers. Think of the impudence of the man! He's actually written up his name there: 'C. Schiller.'"

"He's written up C. Schiller; I'm not so sure he's written up his name," said Mr. Pond.

"Do you mean," she cried, "that you actually know he goes by two names? Why, that makes it worse than ever!"

"Well," said Mr. Pond, rising suddenly, and with a curtness that cut all his own courtesy, "I'll see what I can do about it."

And for the third time did Mr. Pond take some steps to verify the Hartog-Haggard revelations. He took the ten or twelve steps necessary to take him across the road and into the shop of C. Schiller, amid all the shining sabres and yataghans. It was a very peaceable-looking person who waited behind all this array of arms; not to say a rather smooth and sleek one; and Pond, leaning across the counter, addressed him in a low and confidential voice.

"Why the dickens do you people do it? It will be more than half your own fault if there's a row of some kind and a Jingo mob comes here and breaks your windows for your absurd German name. I know very well this is no quarrel of yours. I am well aware," Mr. Pond continued with an earnest gaze, "that you never invaded Belgium. I am fully conscious that your national tastes do not lie in that direction. I know you had nothing to do with burning the Louvain Library or sinking the *Lusitania*. Then why the devil can't you say so? Why can't you call yourself Levy, like your fathers before you—your fathers who go back to the most ancient priesthood of the world? And you'll get into trouble with the Germans, too, some day, if you go about calling yourself Schiller. You might as well go and live in Stratford-on-Avon and call yourself Shakespeare."

"There's a lot of prejudith againth my rathe," said the warden of the armoury.

"There'll be a lot more, unless you take my advice," said Mr. Pond with unusual brevity; and left the shop to return to the office.

The square figure of Mr. Butt, who was sitting at the desk looking towards the doorway, rose at his entrance; but Pond waved him to his seat again and, lighting a cigarette, began to moon about the room in a rather moody fashion. He did not believe that there was anything very much in any of the three avenues of suspicion that had been opened to him; though he owned that there were indirect possibilities about the last. Mr. Levy was certainly not a German; and it was very improbable that he was a real enthusiast for Germany; but it was not altogether impossible to suppose, in the tangle and distraction of all the modern international muddle, that he might be some sort of tool, conscious or unconscious, of a real German conspiracy. So long as that was possible, he must be watched. Mr. Pond was very glad that Mr. Levy lived in the shop exactly opposite.

Indeed, he found himself gazing across the street in the gathering dusk with feelings which he found it hard to analyze. He could still see the shop, with its pattern of queer, archaic weapons, through the frame of the last few poles left in the low scaffolding round the porch;

for the workmen's business had been entirely limited to the porch itself and the props were mostly cleared away, the work being practically over; but there was just enough suggestion of a cluster or network of lines to confuse the prospect at that very confusing turn of the twilight. Once he fancied he saw something flicker behind them, as if a shadow had shifted; and there arose within him the terror of Mrs. Hartog-Haggard, which is the terror of boredom and a sort of paralysed impatience, one of the worst of the woes of life.

Then he saw that the shifting shadow must have been produced by the fact that the lights had been turned up in the shop opposite; and he saw again, and now much more clearly, the queer outline of all those alien Asiatic weapons, the crooked darts and monstrous missiles, the swords with a horrid resemblance to hooks or the blades that bent back and forth like snakes of iron. . . . He became dreamily conscious of the chasm between Christendom and that great other half of human civilization; so dreamily that he hardly knew which was a torture implement and which was a tool. Whether the thought was mingled with his own belief that he was fighting a barbarism at heart as hostile, or whether he had caught a whiff of the strange smell of the East from that apparently harmless human accident who kept the shop, he could hardly be certain himself; but he felt the peculiar oppression of his work as he had never felt it before.

Then he shook himself awake, telling himself sharply that his business was working and not worrying about the atmosphere of the work; and that he should be ashamed to idle when his two subordinates were still busy, Butt behind him, and Travers in the office above. He was all the more surprised, when he turned sharply around, to find that Butt was not working at all; but, like himself, was staring, not to say glaring, as in a congested mystification, into the twilight. Butt was commonly the most calm and prosaic of subordinates; but the look on his face was quite enough to prove that something was really the matter.

"Is anything bothering you?" asked Pond, in a gentle voice which people found very encouraging.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Butt. "I'm bothering about whether I'm going to be a beast or not. It's a beastly caddish thing to say a word, or hint a word, against your comrades or anybody connected with them. But after all—well, sir, there is the country, isn't there?"

"There is certainly the country," said Mr. Pond, very seriously.

"Well," Butt blurted out at last, "I'm not a bit comfortable about Arthur."

Then, after a sort of gasp, he tried again: "At least, it isn't so much Arthur as Arthur's . . . what Arthur's doing. It makes it all the nastier to have to put it like that. But you know he got engaged last week. Have you met his fiancée, sir?"

"I have not yet had the honour," replied Pond, in his punctilious way.

"Well, sir, Arthur brought her in here to-day while you were out; he'd just taken her to the pantomime of Puss-in-Boots on the pier, and they were laughing like anything. Of course, that's quite all right; it was his off time; but it seemed to me it wasn't quite all right that she walked straight upstairs without any invitation, even from him, to the private office where we don't allow visitors to go. Of course, that's about the only possible case where I could hardly prevent it. In the ordinary way, we're perfectly safe; I mean the documents are perfectly safe. There's only one door, and you or I are always sitting bang in front of it; and there's only one staircase, and nobody uses it but we three. Of course, she might have done it in all innocence; that's what made it seem quite too ghastly to snub her. And yet. . . . Well, she's a very nice-looking girl, and no doubt a very nice girl; but somehow that's just the one word that wouldn't jump to my mind about her—innocence."

"Why, what sort of a girl is she?" asked Pond.

"Well," said Mr. Butt, gloomily seeking words, "we all know that making-up and even dyeing your hair doesn't mean what it once did; lots of women do it who are perfectly decent; but not those who are—well utterly inexperienced. It seemed to me that, while she might be perfectly honest, she would know very decidedly whether a thing is done or not."

"If she is engaged to him," said Pond, with a rather unusual severity, "she must know that he is here on highly confidential work, and she must be as anxious to protect his honour as we are. I'm afraid that I shall have to ask you for some sort of description."

"Well," said Butt, "she's very tall and elegant, or . . . no, elegant is exactly the word. She has beautiful golden hair—very beautiful golden hair—and very beautiful long dark eyes that make it look rather like a gilded wig. She has high cheekbones, not in the way that Scotch girls have, but somehow as if it were part of the shape of the skull; and though she's not at all long in the tooth, in any sense, her teeth are just a little to the fore."

"Did he meet her in Besançon, near Belfort?"

"Pretty rum you should say that," said Butt, miserably; "because he did."

Mr. Pond received the news in silence.

"I hope, sir, you won't assume anything against Arthur," said Butt, huskily. "I'm sure I'd do anything to clear him of any——"

As he spoke, the ceiling above them shook with a thud like thunder; then there was a sound of scampering feet; and then utter stillness. No one acquainted with Mr. Pond's usual process of ambulation could have believed that he flew up the staircase as he did just then.

They flung open the door, and they saw all that was to be seen. All that was to be seen was Arthur Travers stretched out face downwards on the ground, and between his shoulder-blades stood out the very long hilt of a very strange-looking sword. Butt impetuously laid hold of it, and was startled to find that it was sunk so deep in the corpse and the carpeted floor that he could not have plucked it out without the most violent muscular effort. Pond had already touched the wrist and felt the rigidity of the muscles and he waved his subordinate away.

"I am sorry to say that our friend is certainly dead," he said steadily. "In that case, you had better not touch things till they can be properly examined." Then, looking at Butt very solemnly, he added:

"You said you would do anything to clear him. One thing is certain: that he is quite cleared."

Pond then walked in silence to the desk, which contained the secret drawer and the secret plan of the harbour. He only compressed his lips when he saw that the drawer was empty.

Pond walked to the telephone and issued orders to about six different people. He did about twenty things, but he did not speak again for about three-quarters of an hour. It was only about the same time that the stunned and bewildered Butt stumbled into speech.

"I simply can't make head or tail of anything. That woman had gone; and, besides, no woman could have nailed him to the floor like that."

"And with such an extraordinary nail," said Pond, and was silent once more.

And indeed the riddle revolved more and more on the one thing that thief and murderer had left behind him: the enormous misshapen weapon. It was not difficult to guess why he had left it behind; it was so difficult to tug out of the floor that he probably had no time to try effectually, hearing Pond clattering up the stairs; he thought it wiser to escape somehow, presumably through the window. But about the nature of the thing itself it was hard to say anything, for it seemed quite abnormal. It was as long as a claymore; yet it was not upon the pattern of any known sword. It had no guard or pommel of any kind. The hilt was as long as the blade; the blade was twice as broad as the hilt; at least, at its base, whence it tapered to a point in a sort of right-angled triangle, only the outer edge or hypotenuse being sharpened. Pond gazed musingly at this uncouth weapon, which was made very rudely of iron and wood painted with garish colours; and his thoughts crept slowly back to that shop across the road that was hung with strange and savage weapons. Yet this seemed to be in a somewhat cruder and gaudier style. Mr. Schiller-Levy naturally denied all knowledge of it, which he would presumably have done in any case; but what was much more cogent, all the real authorities on such barbaric or Oriental arms said that they had never seen such a thing before.

Touching many other things, the darkness began to thin away to a somewhat dreary dawn. It was ascertained that poor Arthur's equivocal fiancée had indeed fled; very possibly in company with the missing plan. She was known by this time to be a woman quite capable of stealing a document or even stabbing a man. But it was doubtful whether any woman was capable of stabbing a man, with that huge and heavy and clumsy instrument, so as to fix him to the floor; and quite impossible to imagine why she should select it for the purpose.

It would all be as clear as death," said Mr. Butt, bitterly, "except for that lumbering, long-hilted short-sword, or whatever it is. It never was in Levy's shop. It never was in Asia or Africa or any of the tribes the learned jossers tell us about. It's the real remaining mystery of the whole thing."

Mr. Pond seemed to be waking up slowly from a trance of hours or days.

"Oh, that," he said, "that's the only thing about it I'm really beginning to understand."

It has been hinted, with every delicacy, we may hope, that the attitude of Mr. Pond towards the visits of Mrs. Hartog-Haggard was, perhaps, rather passive than receptive; that he did not look forward to them as pants the hart for cooling streams; and that for him they rather resembled getting into hot water. It is all the more worthy of record that, on the last occasion of her bringing him a new tale of woe, he actually leapt to his feet with an air of excitement and even of triumph. He had been right in his premonitions about the wisdom of folly; and the triumph was truly the triumph of the fool. Mrs. Hartog-Haggard gave him the clue after all.

She darted in under the scaffolding by the doorway, the same dark and almost antic figure. Full of the Cause, she was utterly oblivious of such trifles as the murder of his friend. She had now reverted to her original disapproval of her own governess. She had altered nothing, except all her reasons for disapproving of her governess. On the former occasion she had appeared to claim the fairy-tale used for pantomimes as exclusively English and part of the healthy innocence of the stately homes of England. Now she was denouncing the German woman for taking the children to the pantomime at all; regarding it as a ruse for filling them with the gruesome tales of Grimm and the terrors of the barbaric forest.

"They're sent to do that," she repeated in the fierce, confidential voice she used in such cases. "They're sent here to undermine all our children's nerves and minds. Could any other nation be such fiends, Mr. Pond? She's been poisoning their poor little minds with horrors about magicians and magic cats; and now the worst has happened, as I knew it would. Well—you haven't done anything to stop it; and my

life is simply ruined. My three girls are all twittering with terror; and my boy is mad."

The symptoms of Mr. Pond were still mainly those of fatigue; and she rapped out a repetition.

"He is mad, I tell you, Mr. Pond; he is actually seeing things out of those horrible German fairy-tales; says he saw a giant with a great knife walking through the town by moonlight . . . a giant, Mr. Pond."

Mr. Pond staggered to his feet and for once really goggled and gulped like a fish. Mrs. Hartog-Haggard watched him with wild eyes, intermittently exclaiming: "Have you no word of consolation for a mother?"

Mr. Pond abruptly controlled himself and managed to recapture, at least, a hazy courtesy.

"Yes, madam," he said. "I have the best possible consolation for a mother. Your son is not mad."

He looked more judicial, and even severe, when he next sat in consultation with Mr. Butt, Sir Hubert Wotton, and Inspector Grote, the leading detective of the district.

"What it comes to is this," said Mr. Pond, very sternly: "that you do not really know the story of Puss-in-Boots. And they talk about this as an epoch of Education."

"Oh, I know it's about a clever cat and all the rest of it," said Butt, vaguely. "A cat that helps its master to get things——"

The Inspector smote his knee with a smack that rang through the office.

"A cat burglar!" he cried. "So that's what you mean. I fancied at first there was something wrong about that bit of scaffolding round the door; but I soon saw it was far too low and small for anybody to climb up to the window by it. But, of course, if we're talking about a really clever cat burglar, there's always some chance that——"

"Pardon me," said Mr. Pond, "does a cat burglar, or for that matter any burglar, any more than any cat, load himself with a gigantic knife rather bigger than a garden spade? Nobody carries a gigantic knife except a giant. This crime was committed by a giant."

They all stared at him; but he resumed with the same air of frigid rebuke:

"What I remark upon, what I regret and regard as symptomatic of serious intellectual decay, is that you apparently do not know that the story of Puss-in-Boots includes a giant. He is also a magician; but he is always depicted, in pictures and pantomimes, as an ogre with a large knife. Signor Alberto Tizzi, that somewhat dubious foreign artist, enacts the part on the pier by the usual expedient of walking on very high stilts, covered by very long trousers. But he sometimes walks about on the stilts and dispenses with the trousers; taking a walk through the almost entirely deserted streets at night. Just round here, especially, the

chances are against his being even seen; all the big houses are shut up, except ours and Mrs. Hartog-Haggard's, which only looks on the street through a landing window; through which her little boy (probably in his nightgown) peered and beheld a real ogre, with a great gory knife, and, perhaps, a great grinning mask, walking majestically under the moon—rather a fine sight to put among the memories of childhood. For the rest, all the poor houses are low houses of one story; and the people would see nothing but his legs, or rather his stilts, even if they did look out; and they probably didn't. The really native poor, in these seaport towns, have country habits; and generally go to bed early. But it wouldn't really have been fatal to his plans even if he had been seen. He was a recognized public entertainer, dressed in his recognized part; and there is nothing illegal in walking about on stilts. The really clever part of it was the trick by which he could leave the stilts standing, and climb out of them on to any ledge or roof or other upper level. So he left them standing outside our doorway, among the poles of the little scaffolding, while he climbed in at the upper window and killed poor Travers."

"If you are sure of this," cried Sir Hubert Wotton, starting to his feet hastily, "you ought to act on it at once!"

"I did act on it at once," replied Pond, with a slight sigh. "This morning two or three clowns with white faces were going about on stilts on the beach, distributing leaflets of the pantomime. One of them was arrested and found to be Signor Tizzi. He was also found, I am glad to say, to be still in possession of the plans." But he sighed again.

"For after all," as Mr. Pond observed, in telling the tale long after, "though we did manage to save the secret plans, the incident was much more of a tragedy than a triumph. And what I most intensely disliked about the tragedy was the irony—what I believe is called the tragic irony, or, alternatively, the Greek irony. We felt perfectly certain we were guarding the only entrance to the office, because we sat staring at the street between two little clusters of sticks, which we knew were a temporary part of the furniture. We didn't count the sticks; we didn't know when there happened to be two more wooden poles standing up among the other wooden poles. We certainly had no notion of what was on top of these two poles; nor would our fancy have easily entertained the idea that it was a pantomime giant. We ought to have seen him—only," said Mr. Pond, ending, as he had begun, with an apologetic little laugh, "he was too tall to be seen."

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

When I was collecting the stories for this anthology, a lot of my friends said helpfully: "Of course you'll lead off with Oppenheim!" And, as a matter of fact, I too thought that good old Opp would be somewhere well toward the front of the book. He is the one writer of our time of whom all readers probably think first when the subject of spies and international intrigue comes up suddenly. That, my friends, is fame. About a decade before the turn of the century, Mr. Oppenheim wrote and published *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, "the first of a long series dealing with the shadowy and mysterious world of diplomacy," to quote his own words. It caught on at once, and thereafter he wrote well over 100 books, all dealing with that shadowy and mysterious, etc., etc., etc., and made himself a reputation and a fortune. No collection is complete without an Oppenheim—and here it is—*The Little Lady from Servia*. What a man was Peter Ruff! And there's a whole book about him, if you care to read further.

THE LITTLE LADY FROM SERVIA

WESTWARD SPED the little electric brougham, driven without regard to police regulations or any rule of the road: silent and swift, wholly regardless of other vehicles—as though, indeed, its occupants were assuming to themselves the rights of Royalty. Inside, Peter Ruff, a little breathless, was leaning forward, tying his white cravat with the aid of the little polished mirror set in the middle of the dark green cushions. At his right hand was Lady Mary, watching his proceedings with an air of agonised impatience.

“Let me tell you—” she begged.

“Kindly wait till I have tied this and put my studs in,” Peter Ruff interrupted. “It is impossible for me to arrive at a ball in this condition, and I cannot give my whole attention to more than one thing at a time.”

“We shall be there in five minutes!” she exclaimed. “What is the good, unless you understand, of your coming at all?”

Peter Ruff surveyed his tie critically. Fortunately, it pleased him. He

began to press the studs into their places with firm fingers. Around them surged the traffic of Piccadilly; in front, the gleaming arc of lights around Hyde Park Corner. They had several narrow escapes. Once the brougham swayed dangerously as they cut in on the wrong side of an island lamp-post. A policeman shouted after them, another held up his hand—the driver of the brougham took no notice.

"I am ready," Peter Ruff said, quietly.

"My younger brother—Maurice," she began, breathlessly—"you've never met him, I know, but you've heard me speak of him. He is private secretary to Sir James Wentley—"

"Minister for Foreign Affairs?" Ruff asked, swiftly.

"Yes! Maurice wants to go in for the Diplomatic Service. He is a dear, and so clever!"

"Is it Maurice who is in trouble?" Peter Ruff asked. "Why didn't he come himself?"

"I am trying to explain," Lady Mary protested. "This afternoon he had an important paper to turn into cipher and hand over to the Prime Minister at the Duchess of Montford's dance to-night. The Prime Minister will arrive in a motor car from the country at about two o'clock, and the first thing he will ask for will be that paper. It has been stolen!"

"At what time did your brother finish copying it, and when did he discover its loss?" Ruff asked, with a slight air of weariness. These preliminary enquiries always bored him.

"He finished it in his own rooms at half-past seven," Lady Mary answered. "He discovered its loss at eleven o'clock—directly he had arrived at the ball."

"Why didn't he come to me himself?" Peter Ruff asked. "I like to have these particulars at first hand."

"He is in attendance upon Sir James at the ball," Lady Mary answered. "There is trouble in the East, as you know, and Sir James is expecting dispatches to-night. Maurice is not allowed to leave."

"Has he told Sir James yet?"

"He had not when I left," Lady Mary answered. "If he is forced to do so, it will be ruin! Mr. Ruff, you must help us. Maurice is such a dear, but a mistake like this, at the very beginning of his career, would be fatal. Here we are. That is my brother waiting just inside the hall."

A young man came up to them in the vestibule. He was somewhat pale, but otherwise perfectly self-possessed. From the shine of his glossy black hair to the tips of his patent boots he was, in appearance, everything that a young Englishman of birth and athletic tastes could hope to be. Peter Ruff liked the look of him. He waited for no introduction, but laid his hand at once upon the young man's shoulder.

"Between seven-thirty and arriving here," he said, drawing him on

one side—"quick! Tell me, whom did you see? What opportunities were there of stealing the paper, and by whom?"

"I finished it at five and twenty past seven," the young man said, "sealed it in an official envelope, and stood it up on my desk by the side of my coat and hat and muffler, which my servant had laid there, ready for me to put on. My bedroom opens out from my sitting room. While I was dressing, two men called for me—Paul Jermyn and Count von Hern. They walked through to my bedroom first, and then sat together in the sitting room until I came out. The door was wide open, and we talked all the time."

"They called accidentally?" Peter Ruff asked.

"No—by appointment," the young man replied. "We were all coming on here to the dance, and we had agreed to dine together first at the Savoy."

"You say that you left the paper on your desk with your coat and hat?" Peter Ruff asked. "Was it there when you came out?"

"Apparently so," the young man answered. "It seemed to be standing in exactly the same place as where I had left it. I put it into my breast pocket, and it was only when I arrived here that I fancied the envelope seemed lighter. I went off by myself and tore it open. There was nothing inside but half a newspaper!"

"What about the envelope?" Peter Ruff asked. "That must have been the same sort of one as you had used or you would have noticed it?"

"It was," the Honorable Maurice answered.

"It was a sort which you kept in your room?"

"Yes!" the young man admitted.

"The packet was changed, then, by some one in your room, or some one who had access to it," Peter Ruff said. "How about your servant?"

"It was his evening off. I let him put out my things and go at seven o'clock."

"You must tell me the nature of the contents of the packet," Peter Ruff declared. "Don't hesitate. You must do it. Remember the alternative."

The young man did hesitate for several moments, but a glance into his sister's appealing face decided him.

"It was our official reply to a secret communication from Russia respecting—a certain matter in the Balkans."

Peter Ruff nodded.

"Where is Count von Hern?" he asked abruptly.

"Inside, dancing."

"I must use a telephone at once," Peter Ruff said. "Ask one of the servants here where I can find one."

Peter Ruff was conducted to a gloomy waiting room, on the table of which stood a small telephone instrument. He closed the door, but he was absent for only a few minutes. When he rejoined Lady Mary and her brother they were talking together in agitated whispers. The latter turned towards him at once.

"Do you mean that you suspect Count von Hern?" he asked, doubtfully. "He is a friend of the Danish Minister's, and every one says that he's such a good chap. He doesn't seem to take the slightest interest in politics—spends nearly all his time hunting or playing polo."

"I don't suspect any one," Peter Ruff answered. "I only know that Count von Hern is an Austrian spy, and that he took your paper! Has he been out of your sight at all since you rejoined him in the sitting room? I mean to say—had he any opportunity of leaving you during the time you were dining together, or did he make any calls *en route*, either on the way to the Savoy or from the Savoy here?"

The young man shook his head.

"He has not been out of my sight for a second."

"Who is the other man—Jermyn?" Peter Ruff asked. "I never heard of him."

"An American—cousin of the Duchess. He could not have had the slightest interest in the affair."

"Please take me into the ballroom," Peter Ruff said to Lady Mary. "Your brother had better not come with us. I want to be as near the Count von Hern as possible."

They passed into the crowded rooms, unnoticed, purposely avoiding the little space where the Duchess was still receiving the late comers among her guests. They found progress difficult, and Lady Mary felt her heart sink as she glanced at the little jewelled watch which hung from her wrist. Suddenly Peter Ruff came to a standstill.

"Don't look for a moment," he said, "but tell me as soon as you can—who is that tall young man, like a Goliath, talking to the little dark woman? You see whom I mean?"

Lady Mary nodded, and they passed on. In a moment or two she answered him.

"How strange that you should ask!" she whispered in his ear. "That is Mr. Jermyn."

They were on the outskirts now of the ballroom itself. One of Lady Mary's partners came up with an open programme and a face full of reproach.

"Do please forgive me, Captain Henderson," Lady Mary begged. "I have hurt my foot, and I am not dancing any more."

"But surely I was to take you in to supper?" the young officer protested, good-humouredly. "Don't tell me that you are going to cut that?"

"I am going to cut everything to-night with everybody," Lady Mary said. "Please forgive me. Come to tea to-morrow and I'll explain."

The young man bowed, and, with a curious glance at Ruff, accepted his dismissal. Another partner was simply waved away.

"Please turn round and come back," Peter Ruff said. "I want to see those two again."

"But we haven't found Count von Hern yet," she protested. "Surely that is more important, is it not? I believe that I saw him dancing just now—there, with the tall girl in yellow."

"Never mind about him, for the moment," Ruff answered. "Walk down this corridor with me. Do you mind talking all the time, please? It will sound more natural, and I want to listen."

The young American and his partner had found a more retired seat now, about three quarters of the way down the pillared vestibule which bordered the ballroom. He was bending over his companion with an air of unmistakable devotion, but it was she who talked. She seemed, indeed, to have a good deal to say to him. The slim white fingers of one hand played all the time with a string of magnificent pearls. Her dark, soft eyes—black as aloes and absolutely un-English—flashed into his. A delightful smile hovered at the corners of her lips. All the time she was talking and he was listening. Lady Mary and her partner passed by unnoticed. At the end of the vestibule they turned and retraced their steps. Peter Ruff was very quiet—he had caught a few of those rapid words. But the woman's foreign accent had troubled him.

"If only she would speak in her own language!" he muttered.

Lady Mary's hand suddenly tightened upon his arm.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "That is Count von Hern!"

A tall, fair young man, very exact in his dress, very stiff in his carriage, with a not unpleasant face, was standing talking to Jermyn and his companion. Jermyn, who apparently found the intrusion an annoyance, was listening to the conversation between the two, with a frown upon his face and a general attitude of irritation. As Lady Mary and her escort drew near, the reason for the young American's annoyance became clearer—his two companions were talking softly, but with great animation, in a foreign language, which it was obvious that he did not understand. Peter Ruff's elbow pressed against his partner's arm, and their pace slackened. He ventured even, to pause for a moment, looking into the ballroom as though in search of some one, and he had by no means the appearance of a man likely to understand Hungarian. Then, to Lady Mary's surprise, he touched the Count von Hern on the shoulder and addressed him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but I fancy that we accidentally exchanged programmes, a few minutes ago, at the buffet. I have lost

mine and picked up one which does not belong to me. As we were standing side by side, it is possibly yours."

"I believe not, sir," he answered, with that pleasant smile which had gone such a long way toward winning him the reputation of being "a good fellow" amongst a fairly large circle of friends. "I believe at any rate," he added, glancing at his programme, "that this is my own. You mistake me, probably, for some one else."

Peter Ruff, without saying a word, was actor enough to suggest that he was unconvinced. The Count good-humouredly held out his programme.

"You shall see for yourself," he remarked. "That is not yours, is it? Besides, I have not been to the buffet at all this evening."

Peter Ruff cast a swift glance down the programme which the Count had handed him. Then he apologised profusely.

"I was mistaken," he admitted. "I am very sorry."

The Count bowed.

"It is of no consequence, sir," he said, and resumed his conversation. Peter Ruff passed on with Lady Mary. At a safe distance, she glanced at him enquiringly.

"It was his programme I wanted to see," Peter Ruff explained. "It is as I thought. He has had four dances with the Countess—"

"Who is she?" Lady Mary asked, quickly.

"The little dark lady with whom he is talking now," Peter Ruff continued. "He seems, too, to be going early. He has no dances reserved after the twelfth. We will go downstairs at once, if you please. I must speak to your brother."

"Have you been able to think of anything?" she asked, anxiously. "Is there any chance at all, do you think?"

"I believe so," Peter Ruff answered. "It is most interesting. Don't be too sanguine, though. The odds are against us, and the time is very short. Is the driver of your electric brougham to be trusted?"

"Absolutely," she assured him. "He is an old servant."

"Will you lend him to me?" Peter Ruff asked, "and tell him that he is to obey my instructions absolutely?"

"Of course," she answered. "You are going away, then?"

Peter Ruff nodded. He was a little sparing of words just then. The thoughts were chasing one another through his brain. He was listening, too, for the sweep of a dress behind.

"Is there nothing I can do?" Lady Mary begged, eagerly.

Peter Ruff shook his head. In the distance he saw the Honorable Maurice come quickly toward them. With a firm but imperceptible gesture he waved him away.

"Don't let your brother speak to me," he said. "We can't tell who is behind. What time did you say the Prime Minister was expected?"

"At two o'clock," Lady Mary said, anxiously.

Peter Ruff glanced at his watch. It was already half an hour past midnight.

"Very well," he said, "I will do what I can. If my theory is wrong, it will be nothing. If I am right—well, there is a chance, anyhow. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime?" she repeated, breathlessly.

"Take your brother back to the ballroom," Peter Ruff directed. "Make him dance—dance yourself. Don't give yourselves away by looking anxious. When the time is short—say at a quarter to two—he can come down here and wait for me."

"If you don't come!" she exclaimed.

"Then we shall have lost," Peter Ruff said, calmly. "If you don't see me again to-night, you had better read the newspapers carefully for the next few days."

"You are going to do something dangerous!" she protested.

"There is danger in interfering at all in such a matter as this," he answered, "but you must remember that it is not only my profession—it is my hobby. Remember, too," he added, with a smile, "that I do not often lose!"

For twenty minutes Peter Ruff sat in the remote corner of Lady Mary's electric brougham, drawn up at the other side of the Square, and waited. At last he pressed a button. They glided off. Before them was a large, closed motor car. They started in discreet chase.

Fortunately, however, the chase was not a long one. The car which Peter Ruff had been following was drawn up before a plain, solid-looking house, unlit and of gloomy appearance. The little lady with the wonderful eyes was already halfway up the flagged steps. Hastily lifting the flap and looking behind as they passed, her pursuer saw her open the door with a latchkey, and disappear. Peter Ruff pulled the check-string and descended. For several moments he stood and observed the house into which the lady whom he had been following had disappeared. Then he turned to the driver.

"I want you to watch that house," he said, "never to take your eyes off it. When I reappear from it, if I do at all, I shall probably be in a hurry. Directly you see me be on your box ready to start. A good deal may depend upon our getting away quickly."

"Very good, sir," the man answered. "How long am I to wait here for you?"

Peter Ruff's lips twisted into a curious little smile.

"Until two o'clock," he answered. "If I am not out by then, you needn't bother any more about me. You can return and tell your mistress exactly what has happened."

"Hadn't I better come and try and get you out, sir?" the man

asked. "Begging your pardon, but her Ladyship told me that there might be queer doings. I'm a bit useful in a scrap, sir," he added. "I do a bit of sparring regularly."

Peter Ruff shook his head.

"If there's any scrap at all," he said, "you had better be out of it. Do as I have said."

The motor car had turned round and disappeared now, and in a few moments Peter Ruff stood before the door of the house into which the little lady had disappeared. The problem of entrance was already solved for him. The door had been left unlatched; only a footstool had been placed against it inside. Peter Ruff, without hesitation, pushed the door softly open and entered, replaced the footstool in its former position, and stood with his back to the wall, in the darkest corner of the hall, looking around him—listening intently. Nearly opposite the door of a room stood ajar. It was apparently lit up, but there was no sound of any one moving inside. Upstairs, in one of the rooms on the first floor, he could hear light footsteps—a woman's voice humming a song. He listened to the first few bars, and understanding became easier. Those first few bars were the opening ones of the Servian national anthem!

With an effort, Peter Ruff concentrated his thoughts upon the immediate present. The little lady was upstairs. The servants had apparently retired for the night. He crept up to the half-open door and peered in. The room, as he had hoped to find it, was empty, but Madame's easy-chair was drawn up to the fire, and some coffee stood upon the hob. Stealthily Peter Ruff crept in and glanced around, seeking for a hiding place. A movement upstairs hastened his decision. He pushed aside the massive curtains which separated this from a connecting room. He had scarcely done so when light footsteps were heard descending the stairs.

Peter Ruff found his hiding place all that could have been desired. This secondary room itself was almost in darkness, but he was just able to appreciate the comforting fact that it possessed a separate exit into the hall. Through the folds of the curtain he had a complete view of the further apartment. The little lady had changed her gown of stiff white satin for one of flimsier material, and, seated in the easy-chair, she was busy pouring herself out some coffee. She took a cigarette from a silver box, and lighting it, curled herself up in the chair and composed herself as though to listen. To her as well as to Peter Ruff, as he crouched in his hiding place, the moments seemed to pass slowly enough. Yet, as he realised afterward, it could not have been ten minutes before she sat upright in a listening attitude. There was some one coming! Peter Ruff, too, heard a man's firm footsteps come up the flagged stones.

The little lady sprang to her feet.

"Paul!" she exclaimed.

Paul Jermyn came slowly to meet her. He seemed a little out of breath. His tie was all disarranged and his collar unfastened. The little lady, however, noticed none of these things. She looked only into his face.

"Have you got it?" she asked, eagerly.

He thrust his hand into his breast-coat pocket, and held an envelope out toward her.

"Sure!" he answered. "I promised!"

She gave a little sob, and with the packet in her hand came running straight toward the spot where Peter Ruff was hiding. He shrank back as far as possible. She stopped just short of the curtain, opened the drawer of a table which stood there, and slipped the packet in. Then she came back once more to where Paul Jermyn was standing.

"My friend!" she cried, holding out her hands—"my dear, dear friend! Shall I ever be able to thank you enough?"

"Why, if you try," he answered, smiling, "I think that you could!"

She laid her hand upon his arm—a little caressing, foreign gesture.

"Tell me," she said, "how did you manage it?"

"We left the dance together," Jermyn said. "I could see that he wanted to get rid of me, but I offered to take him in my motor car. I told the man to choose some back streets, and while we were passing through one of them, I took Von Hern by the throat. We had a struggle, of course, but I got the paper."

"What did you do with Von Hern?" she asked.

"I left him on his doorstep," the young American answered. "He wasn't really hurt, but he was only half conscious. I don't think he'll bother any one to-night."

"You dear, brave man!" she murmured. "Paul, what am I to say to you?"

He laughed.

"That's what I'm here to ask," he declared. "You wouldn't give me my answer at the ball. Perhaps you'll give it me now?"

They sprang apart. Ruff felt his nerves stiffen—felt himself constrained to hold even his breath as he widened a little the crack in the curtains. This was no stealthy entrance. The door had been flung open. Von Hern, his dress in wild disorder, pale as a ghost, and with a great bloodstain upon his cheek, stood confronting them.

"When you have done with your love-making," he called out, "I'll trouble you to restore my property!"

The electric light gleamed upon a small revolver which flashed out toward the young American. Paul Jermyn never hesitated for a moment. He seized the chair by his side and flung it at Von Hern. There was a shot, the crash of the falling chair, a cry from Jermyn, who never

hesitated, however, in his rush. The two men closed. A second shot went harmlessly to the ceiling. The little lady stole away—stole softly across the room toward the table. She opened the drawer. Suddenly the blood in her veins was frozen into fear. From nowhere, it seemed to her, came a hand which held her wrists like iron!

"Madam," Peter Ruff whispered from behind the curtain, "I am sorry to deprive you of it, but this is stolen property."

Her screams rang through the room. Even the two men released one another.

"It is gone!" she cried. "Some one was hiding in the room! Quick!"

She sprang into the hall. The two men followed her. The front door was slammed. They heard flying footsteps outside. Von Hern was out first, clearing the little flight of steps in one bound. Across the road he saw a flying figure. A level stream of fire poured from his hand—twice, three times. But Peter Ruff never faltered. Round the corner he tore. The man had kept his word—the brougham was already moving slowly.

"Jump in, sir," the man cried. "Throw yourself in. Never mind about the door."

They heard the shouts behind. Peter Ruff did as he was bid, and sat upon the floor, raising himself gradually to the seat when they had turned another corner. Then he put his head out of the window.

"Back to the Duchess of Montford's!" he ordered.

The latest of the guests had ceased to arrive—a few were already departing. It was an idle time, however, with the servants who loitered in the vestibules of Montford House, and they looked with curiosity upon this strange guest who arrived at five minutes to two, limping a little, and holding his left arm in his right hand. One footman on the threshold nearly addressed him, but the words were taken out of his mouth when he saw Lady Mary and her brother—the Honorable Maurice Sotherest—hasten forward to greet him.

Peter Ruff smiled upon them benignly.

"You can take the paper out of my breast-coat pocket," he said.

The young man's fingers gripped it. Through Lady Mary's great thankfulness, however, the sudden fear came shivering.

"You are hurt!" she whispered. "There is blood on your sleeve."

"Just a graze," Peter Ruff answered. "Von Hern wasn't much good at a running target. Back to the ballroom, young man," he added. "Don't you see who's coming?"

The Prime Minister came up the tented way into Montford House. He, too, wondered a little at the man whom he met on his way out, holding his left arm, and looking more as though he had emerged from a street fight than from the Duchess of Montford's ball. Peter Ruff went home smiling.



A. E. W. MASON

In Peiffer, it seems to me, we are back on surer ground. A. E. W. Mason, that grand writer of adventure stories, isn't always as vraisemblant—if there is such a word—as he is in this story. He is sometimes sensational and improbable, although always plausible and enjoyable. In Peiffer, a story that I like, Slingsby, the British agent, is a believable figure, and so is Peiffer the German; while the background of Lisbon is colorful, interesting, and timely. The story is excellent, and principally, I think, because Mr. Mason has written with less than his accustomed exuberance and melodrama. There are some nice touches of humor, unobtrusive and charming: the early picture of Peiffer “making frightfulness” is delicious, and the last picture of Peiffer eating of his own frightfulness, is conceived on a high level of imagination. Alfred Edward Woodley Mason (I don't invent these names, I get them out of dictionaries) is the creator of M. Hanaud of the Paris Sûreté, one of the notable detectives of fiction. Incidentally, Mr. Mason was an officer of Naval Intelligence, during World War I, and knows a thing or two about spies.

PEIFFER

FOR A MOMENT I was surprised to see the stout and rubicund Slingsby in Lisbon. He was drinking a vermouth and seltzer at five o'clock in the afternoon at a café close to the big hotel. But at that time Portugal was still a neutral country and a happy hunting ground for a good many thousand Germans. Slingsby was lolling in his chair with such exceeding indolence that I could not doubt his business was pressing and serious. I accordingly passed him by as if I had never seen him in my life before. But he called out to me. So I took a seat at his table.

Of what we talked about I have not the least recollection, for my eyes were quite captivated by a strange being who sat alone fairly close to Slingsby, at one side and a little behind him. This was a man of middle age, with reddish hair, a red, square, inflamed face and a bristly moustache. He was dressed in a dirty suit of grey flannel; he wore a battered Panama pressed down upon his head; he carried pince-nez on the bridge of his nose, and he sat with a big bock of German beer in front of him. But I never saw him touch the beer. He sat in a studied attitude of ferocity, his elbow on the table, his chin propped on the palm of his hand, his head pushed aggressively forward, and he glared at Slingsby through his glasses with the fixed stare of hatred and fury

which a master workman in wax might give to a figure in a Chamber of Horrors. Indeed, it seemed to me that he must have rehearsed his bearing in some such quarter, for there was nothing natural or convinced in him from the brim of his Panama to the black patent leather tips of his white canvas shoes.

I touched Slingsby on the arm.

"Who is that man, and what have you done to him?"

Slingsby looked round unconcernedly.

"Oh, that's only Peiffer," he replied. "Peiffer making frightfulness." "Peiffer?"

The name was quite strange to me.

"Yes. Don't you know him? He's a product of 1914," and Slingsby leaned towards me a little. "Peiffer is an officer in the German Navy. You would hardly guess it, but he is. Now that their country is at war, officers in the German Navy have a marked amount of spare time which they never had before. So Peiffer went to a wonderful Government school in Hamburg, where in twenty lessons they teach the gentle art of espionage, a sort of Berlitz school. Peiffer ate his dinners and got his degrees, so to speak, and now he's at Lisbon putting obi on me."

"It seems rather infantile, and must be annoying," I said; but Slingsby would only accept half the statement. "Infantile, yes. Annoying, not at all. For so long as Peiffer is near me, being frightful, I know he's not up to mischief."

"Mischief!" I cried. "That fellow? What mischief can he do?"

Slingsby viciously crushed the stub of his cigarette in the ashtray.

"A deuce of a lot, my friend. Don't make any mistake. Peiffer's methods are infantile and barbaric, but he has a low and fertile cunning in the matter of ideas. I know. I have had some."

And Slingsby was to have more, very much more: in the shape of a great many sleepless nights, during which he wrestled with a dreadful uncertainty to get behind that square red face and those shining pincenez, and reach the dark places of Peiffer's mind.

The first faint wisp of cloud began to show six weeks later, when Slingsby happened to be in Spain.

"Something's up," he said, scratching his head. "But I'm hanged if I can guess what it is. See what you can make of it"; and here is the story which he told.

Three Germans dressed in the black velvet corduroy, the white stockings and the rope-soled white shoes of the Spanish peasant, arrived suddenly in the town of Cartagena, and put up at an inn in a side-street near the harbour. Cartagena, for all that it is one of the chief naval ports of Spain, is a small place, and the life of it ebbs and flows in one narrow street, the Calle Mayor; so that very little can happen which is not immediately known and discussed. The arrival of the three mys-

terious Germans provoked, consequently, a deal of gossip and curiosity, and the curiosity was increased when the German Consul sitting in front of the Casino loudly professed complete ignorance of these very doubtful compatriots of his, and an exceeding great contempt for them. The next morning, however, brought a new development. The three Germans complained publicly to the Alcalde. They had walked through Valencia, Alicante, and Murcia in search of work, and everywhere they had been pestered and shadowed by the police.

"Our Consul will do nothing for us," they protested indignantly. "He will not receive us, nor will any German in Cartagena. We are poor people." And having protested, they disappeared in the night.

But a few days later the three had emerged again at Almeria, and at a mean café in one of the narrow, blue-washed Moorish streets of the old town. Peiffer was identified as one of the three—not the Peiffer who had practised frightfulness in Lisbon, but a new and wonderful Peiffer, who inveighed against the shamelessness of German officials on the coasts of Spain. At Almeria, in fact, Peiffer made a scene at the German Vice-Consulate, and, having been handed over to the police, was fined and threatened with imprisonment. At this point the story ended.

"What do you make of it?" asked Slingsby.

"First, that Peiffer is working south; and, secondly, that he is quarrelling with his own officials."

"Yes, but quarrelling with marked publicity," said Slingsby. "That, I think we shall find, is the point of real importance. Peiffer's methods are not merely infantile; they are elaborate. He is working down South. I think that I will go to Gibraltar. I have always wished to see it."

Whether Slingsby was speaking the truth, I had not an idea. But he went to Gibraltar, and there an astonishing thing happened to him. He received a letter, and the letter came from Peiffer. Peiffer was at Algeciras, just across the bay in Spain, and he wanted an interview. He wrote for it with the most brazen impertinence.

"I cannot, owing to this with-wisdom-so-easily-to-have-been-avoided war, come to Gibraltar, but I will remain at your disposition here."

"That," said Slingsby, "from the man who was making frightfulness at me a few weeks ago, is a proof of some nerve. We will go and see Peiffer. We will stay at Algeciras from Saturday to Monday, and we will hear what he has to say."

A polite note was accordingly dispatched, and on Sunday morning Peiffer, decently clothed in a suit of serge, was shown into Slingsby's private sitting-room. He plunged at once into the story of his wanderings. We listened to it without a sign that we knew anything about it.

"So?" from time to time said Slingsby, with inflections of increasing surprise, but that was all. Then Peiffer went on to his grievances.

"Perhaps you have heard how I was treated by the Consuls?" he interrupted himself to ask suddenly.

"No," Slingsby replied calmly. "Continue!"

Peiffer wiped his forehead and his glasses. We were each one, in his way, all working for our respective countries. The work was honourable. But there were limits to endurance. All his fatigue and perils went for nothing in the eyes of comfortable officials sure of their salary. He had been fined; he had been threatened with imprisonment. It was *unverschämt* the way he had been treated.

"So?" said Slingsby firmly. There are fine inflections by which that simple word may be made to express most of the emotions. Slingsby's "So" expressed a passionate agreement with the downtrodden Peiffer.

"Flesh and blood can stand it no longer," cried Peiffer, "and my heart is flesh. No, I have had enough."

Throughout the whole violent tirade, in his eyes, in his voice, in his gestures, there ran an eager, wistful plea that we should take him at his face value and believe every word he said.

"So I came to you," he said at last, slapping his knee and throwing out his hand afterwards like a man who has taken a mighty resolution. "Yes. I have no money, nothing. And they will give me none. It is *unverschämt*. So," and he screwed up his little eyes and wagged a podgy forefinger—"so the service I had begun for my Government I will now finish for you."

Slingsby examined the carpet curiously.

"Well, there are possibly some shillings to be had if the service is good enough. I do not know. But I cannot deal in the dark. What sort of a service is it?"

"Ah!" Peiffer hitched his chair nearer.

"It is a question of rifles—rifles for over there," and, looking out through the window, he nodded towards Gibel Musa and the coast of Morocco.

Slingsby did not so much as flinch. I almost groaned aloud. We were to be treated to the stock legend of the ports, the new edition of the Spanish prisoner story. I, the mere tourist in search of health, could have gone on with Peiffer's story myself, even to the exact number of the rifles.

"It was a great plan," Peiffer continued. "Fifty thousand rifles, no less." There always were fifty thousand rifles. "They are buried—near the sea." They always were buried either near the sea or on the frontier of Portugal. "With ammunition. They are to be landed outside Melilla, where I have been about this very affair, and distributed amongst the Moors in the unsubdued country on the edge of the French zone."

"So?" exclaimed Slingsby with the most admirable imitation of consternation.

"Yes, but you need not fear. You shall have the rifles—when I know exactly where they are buried."

"Ah!" said Slingsby.

He had listened to the familiar rigmarole, certain that behind it there was something real and sinister which he did not know—something which he was desperately anxious to find out.

"Then you do not know where they are buried?"

"No, but I shall know if—I am allowed to go into Gibraltar. Yes, there is someone there. I must put myself into relations with him. Then I shall know, and so shall you."

So here was some part of the truth, at all events. Peiffer wanted to get into Gibraltar. His disappearance from Lisbon, his reappearance in corduroys, his quarrelsome progress down the east coast, his letter to Slingsby, and his story, were all just the items of an elaborate piece of machinery invented to open the gates of that fortress to him. Slingsby's only movement was to take his cigarette-case lazily from his pocket.

"But why in the world," he asked, "can't you get your man in Gibraltar to come out here and see you?"

Peiffer shook his head.

"He would not come. He has been told to expect me, and I shall give him certain tokens from which he can guess my trustworthiness. If I write to him, 'Come to me,' he will say 'This is a trap.'"

Slingsby raised another objection:

"But I shouldn't think that you can expect the authorities to give you a safe conduct into Gibraltar upon your story."

Peiffer swept that argument aside with a contemptuous wave of his hand.

"I have a Danish passport. See!" and he took the document from his breast pocket. It was complete, to his photograph.

"Yes, you can certainly come in on that," said Slingsby. He reflected for a moment before he added: "I have no power, of course. But I have some friends. I think you may reasonably reckon that you won't be molested."

I saw Peiffer's eyes glitter behind his glasses.

"But there's a condition," Slingsby continued sharply. "You must not leave Gibraltar without coming personally to me and giving me twenty-four hours' notice."

Peiffer was all smiles and agreement.

"But of course. We shall have matters to talk over—terms to arrange. I must see you."

"Exactly. Cross by the nine-fifty steamer to-morrow morning. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." And suddenly Peiffer stood up and actually saluted, as though he had now taken service under Slingsby's command.

The unexpected movement almost made me vomit. Slingsby himself moved quickly away, and his face lost for a second the mask of impassivity. He stood at the window and looked across the water to the city of Gibraltar.

Slingsby had been wounded in the early days of the war, and ever since he had been greatly troubled because he was not still in the trenches in Flanders. The casualty lists filled him with shame and discontent. So many of his friends, the men who had trained and marched with him, were laying down their gallant lives. He should have been with them. But during the last few days a new knowledge and inspiration had come to him. Gibraltar! A tedious, little, unlovely town of yellow houses and coal sheds, with an undesirable climate. Yes. But above it was the rock, the heart of a thousand memories and traditions which made it beautiful. He looked at it now with its steep wooded slopes, scarred by roads and catchments and the emplacements of guns. How much of England was recorded there! To how many British sailing on great ships from far dominions this huge buttress towering to its needle-ridge was the first outpost of the homeland! And for the moment he seemed to be its particular guardian, the ear which must listen night and day lest harm come to it. Harm the Rock, and all the Empire, built with such proud and arduous labour, would stagger under the blow, from St. Kilda to distant Lyttelton. He looked across the water and imagined Gibraltar as it looked at night, its houselights twinkling like a crowded zone of stars, and its great search-beams turning the ships in the harbour and the stone of the moles into gleaming silver, and travelling far over the dark waters. No harm must come to Gibraltar. His honour was all bound up in that. This was his service, and as he thought upon it he was filled with a cold fury against the traitor who thought it so easy to make him fail. But every hint of his anger had passed from his face as he turned back into the room.

"If you bring me good information, why, we can do business," he said; and Peiffer went away.

I was extremely irritated by the whole interview, and could hardly wait for the door to close.

"What knocks me over," I cried, "is the impertinence of the man. Does he really think that any old yarn like the fifty thousand rifles is going to deceive you?"

Slingsby lit a cigarette.

"Peiffer's true to type, that's all," he answered imperturbably. "They are vain, and vanity makes them think that you will at once believe what they want you to believe. So their deceits are a little crude." Then a smile broke over his face, and to some tune with which I was unfamiliar he sang softly: "But he's coming to Gibraltar in the morning."

"You think he will?"

"I am sure of it."

"And," I added doubtfully—it was not my business to criticise—"on conditions he can walk out again?"

Slingsby's smile became a broad grin.

"His business in Gibraltar, my friend, is not with me. He will not want to meet us any more; as soon as he has done what he came for he will go—or try to go. He thinks we are fools, you see."

And in the end it seemed almost as though Peiffer was justified of his belief. He crossed the next morning. He went to a hotel of the second class; he slept in the hotel, and next morning he vanished. Suddenly there was no more Peiffer. Peiffer was not. For six hours Peiffer was not; and then at half-past five in the afternoon the telephone rang in an office where Slingsby was waiting. He rushed to the instrument.

"Who is it?" he cried, and I saw a wave of relief surge into his face. Peiffer had been caught outside the gates and within a hundred yards of the neutral zone. He had strolled out in the thick of the dockyard workmen going home to Linea in Spain.

"Search him and bring him up here at once," said Slingsby, and he dropped into his chair and wiped his forehead. "Phew! Thirty seconds more and he might have snapped his fingers at us." He turned to me. "I shall want a prisoner's escort here in half an hour."

I went about that business and returned in time to see Slingsby giving an admirable imitation of a Prussian police official.

"So, Peiffer," he cried sternly, "you broke your word. Do not deny it. It will be useless."

The habit of a lifetime asserted itself in Peiffer. He quailed before authority when authority began to bully.

"I did not know I was outside the walls," he faltered. "I was taking a walk. No one stopped me."

"Sol" Slingsby snorted. "And these, Peiffer—what have you to say of these?"

There were four separate passports which had been found in Peiffer's pockets. He could be a Dane of Esbjerg, a Swede of Stockholm, a Norwegian of Christiania, or a Dutchman from Amsterdam. All four nationalities were open to Peiffer to select from.

"They provide you with these, no doubt, in your school at Hamburg," and Slingsby paused to collect his best German. "You are a prisoner of war. *Das ist genug*," he cried, and Peiffer climbed to the internment camp.

So far so good. Slingsby had annexed Peiffer, but more important than Peiffer was Peiffer's little plot, and that he had not got. Nor did the most careful inquiry disclose what Peiffer had done and where he had been during the time when he was not. For six hours Peiffer had

been loose in Gibraltar, and Slingsby began to get troubled. He tried to assume the mentality of Peiffer, and so reach his intention, but that did not help. He got out all the reports in which Peiffer's name was mentioned and read them over again.

I saw him sit back in his chair and remain looking straight in front of him.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, and he turned over the report to me, pointing to a passage. It was written some months before, at Melilla, on the African side of the Mediterranean, and it ran like this:

"Peiffer frequents the low houses and cafés, where he spends a good deal of money and sometimes gets drunk. When drunk he gets very arrogant, and has been known to boast that he has been three times in Bordeaux since the war began, and, thanks to his passports, can travel as easily as if the world were at peace. On such occasions he expresses the utmost contempt for neutral nations. I myself have heard him burst out: 'Wait until we have settled with our enemies. Then we will deal properly with the neutral nations. They shall explain to us on their knees. Meanwhile,' and he thumped the table, making the glasses rattle, 'let them keep quiet and hold their tongues. We shall do what we like in neutral countries.'"

I read the passage.

"Do you see that last sentence? 'We shall do what we like in neutral countries.' No man ever spoke the mind of his nation better than Peiffer did that night in a squalid café in Melilla."

Slingsby looked out over the harbour to where the sun was setting on the sierras. He would have given an arm to be sure of what Peiffer had set on foot behind those hills.

"I wonder," he said uneasily, and from that day he began to sleep badly.

Then came another and a most disquieting phase of the affair. Peiffer began to write letters to Slingsby. He was not comfortable. He was not being treated as an officer should be. He had no amusements, and his food was too plain. Moreover, there were Germans and Austrians up in the camp who turned up their noses at him because their birth was better than his.

"You see what these letters mean?" said Slingsby. "Peiffer wants to be sent away from the Rock."

"You are reading your own ideas into them," I replied.

But Slingsby was right. Each letter under its simple and foolish excuses was a prayer for translation to a less dangerous place. For as the days passed and no answer was vouchsafed, the prayer became a real cry of fear.

"I claim to be sent to England without any delay. I must be sent," he wrote frankly and frantically.

Slingsby set his teeth with a grim satisfaction.

"No, my friend, you shall stay while the danger lasts. If it's a year, if you are alone in the camp, still you shall stay. The horrors you have planned you shall share with every man, woman and child in the town."

We were in this horrible and strange predicament. The whole colony was menaced, and from the Lines to Europa Point only two men knew of the peril. Of those two, one, in an office down by the harbour, ceaselessly and vainly, with a dreadful anxiety, asked "When?" The other, the prisoner, knew the very hour and minute of the catastrophe, and waited for it with the sinking fear of a criminal awaiting the fixed moment of his execution.

Thus another week passed.

Slingsby became a thing of broken nerves. If you shut the door noisily he cursed; if you came in noiselessly he cursed yet louder, and one evening he reached the stage when the sunset gun made him jump.

"That's enough," I said sternly. "To-day is Saturday. To-morrow we borrow the car"—there is only one worth talking about on the Rock—"and we drive out."

"I can't do it," he cried.

I continued: "We will lunch somewhere by the road, and we will go on to the country house of the Claytons, who will give us tea. Then in the afternoon we will return."

Slingsby hesitated. It is curious to remember on how small a matter so much depended. I believe he would have refused, but at that moment the sunset gun went off and he jumped out of his chair.

"Yes, I am fairly rocky," he admitted. "I will take a day off."

I borrowed the car, and we set off and lunched according to our programme. It was perhaps half an hour afterwards when we were going slowly over a remarkably bad road. A powerful car, driven at a furious pace, rushed round a corner towards us, swayed, lurched, and swept past us with a couple of inches to spare, whilst a young man seated at the wheel shouted a greeting and waved his hand.

"Who the dickens was that?" I asked.

"I know," replied Slingsby. "It's Morano. He's a count, and will be a marquis and no end of a swell if he doesn't get killed motoring. Which, after all, seems likely."

I thought no more of the man until his name cropped up whilst we were sitting at tea on the Claytons' veranda.

"We passed Morano," said Slingsby. And Mrs. Clayton said with some pride—she was a pretty, kindly woman, but she rather affected the Spanish nobility:

"He lunched with us to-day. You know he is staying in Gibraltar."

"Yes, I know that," said Slingsby. "For I met him a little time ago. He wanted to know if there was a good Government launch for sale."

Mrs. Clayton raised her eyebrows in surprise. "A launch? Surely you are wrong. He is devoting himself to aviation."

"Is he?" said Slingsby, and a curious look flickered for a moment over his face.

We left the house half an hour afterwards, and as soon as we were out of sight of it Slingsby opened his hand. He was holding a visiting card.

"I stole this off the hall table," he said. "Mrs. Clayton will never forgive me. Just look at it."

His face had become extraordinarily grave. The card was Morano's, and it was engraved after the Spanish custom. In Spain, when a woman marries she does not lose her name. She may be in appearance more subject to her husband than the women of other countries, though you will find many good judges to tell you that women rule Spain. In any case her name is not lost in that of her husband; the children will bear it as well as their father's, and will have it printed on their cards. Thus, Mr. Jones will call on you, but on the card he leaves he will be styled:

MR. JONES AND ROBINSON

if Robinson happens to be his mother's name, and if you are scrupulous in your etiquette you will so address him.

Now, on the card which Slingsby had stolen, the Count Morano was described:

MORANO Y GOLTZ

"I see," I replied. "Morano had a German mother."

I was interested. There might be nothing in it, of course. A noble of Spain might have a German mother and still not intrigue for the Germans against the owners of Gibraltar. But no sane man would take a bet about it.

"The point is," said Slingsby, "I am pretty sure that is not the card which he sent in to me when he came to ask about a launch. We will go straight to the office and make sure."

By the time we got there we were both somewhat excited, and we searched feverishly in the drawers of Slingsby's writing-table.

"I shouldn't be such an ass as to throw it away," he said, turning over his letters. "No! Here it is!" and a sharp exclamation burst from his lips. "Look!"

He laid the card he had stolen side by side with the card which he had just found, and between the two there was a difference—to both of us a veritable world of difference. For from the second card the "y Goltz," the evidence that Morano was half-German, had disappeared.

"And it's not engraved," said Slingsby, bending down over the table. "It's just printed—printed in order to mislead us."

Slingsby sat down in his chair. A great hope was bringing the life back to his tired face, but he would not give the reins to his hope.

"Let us go slow," he said, warned by the experience of a hundred disappointments. "Let us see how it works out. Morano comes to Gibraltar and makes a prolonged stay in a hotel. Not being a fool, he is aware that I know who is in Gibraltar and who is not. Therefore he visits me with a plausible excuse for being in Gibraltar. But he takes the precaution to have this card specially printed. Why, if he is playing straight? He pretends he wants a launch, but he is really devoting himself to aviation. Is it possible that the Count Morano, not forgetting Goltz, knows exactly how the good Peiffer spent the six hours we can't account for, and what his little plan is?"

I sprang up. It did seem that Slingsby was getting at last to the heart of Peiffer's secret.

"We will now take steps," said Slingsby, and telegrams began to fly over the wires. In three days' time the answers trickled in.

An agent of Morano's had bought a German aeroplane in Lisbon. A German aviator was actually at the hotel there. Slingsby struck the table with his fist.

"What a fool I am!" he cried. "Give me a newspaper."

I handed him one of that morning's date. Slingsby turned it feverishly over, searching down the columns of the provincial news until he came to the heading "Portugal."

"Here it is!" he cried, and he read aloud. "The great feature of the Festival week this year will be, of course, the aviation race from Villa Real to Seville. Amongst those who have entered machines is the Count Morano y Goltz."

He leaned back and lit a cigarette.

"We have got it! Morano's machine, driven by the German aviator, rises from the aerodrome at Villa Real in Portugal with the others, heads for Seville, drops behind, turns and makes a bee-line for the Rock, Peiffer having already arranged with Morano for signals to be made where bombs should be dropped. When is the race to be?"

I took the newspaper. "Ten days from now."

"Good!"

Once more the telegrams began to fly. A week later Slingsby told me the result.

"Owing to unforeseen difficulties, the Festival committee at Villa Real has reorganised its arrangements, and there will be no aviation race. Oh, they'll do what they like in neutral countries, will they? But Peiffer shan't know," he added, with a grin. "Peiffer shall eat of his own frightfulness."

JOHN DICKSON CARR

John Dickson Carr, I must tell you, is a couple of other fellows. He is "Carter Dickson" and, less frequently, "Carr Dickson." Under all three names he is one of the best mystery writers of our time. As the creator of Sir Henry Merrivale ("H.M."), Dr. Gideon Fell, and Bencolin, the Parisian police inspector, mystery fans are deeply in his debt. His books have been praised wherever they have appeared, and critics agree that he is a new master, with a unique sense of the macabre. His robust characters, his salty idiom, and his unfailing gusto of style might suggest to readers that he was an American; and they would be right; in spite of his largely British residence, he was born in Pennsylvania. Mr. Carr-Dickson believes the unforgivable sin in a mystery story is to be dull, and he is right; it is a sin, however, of which he has never himself been accused. The Proverbial Murder, selected for inclusion in this collection, is one of his best short tales; it appears here for the first time in a book, in this country. It is a story about the fat and twinkling Dr. Gideon Fell, and I hope you like it.

THE PROVERBIAL MURDER

THE TIMBERED COTTAGE, which belonged to Herr Dr. Ludwig Meyer and which was receiving attention from the man with the field-glasses, stood some distance down in the valley.

In clear moonlight, the valley was washed clean of color except at one point, where a light showed in a window to the right of Dr. Meyer's door. It was a diamond-paned window with two leaves, now closed. The lamplight streamed out through it, touching grass and rose-beds.

At a desk beside the window, Dr. Meyer sat at his endless writing. "A Dissertation on the Theory of the Atom," was its official title. The white cretonne curtains of the window were not drawn. From this angle the watchers had an awkward, sideways view of him.

Some quarter of a mile away, on the edge of the hill, the man with the field-glasses lay flat on his face. His back ached and his arms felt cramped. Momentarily he lowered the glasses and peered round.

"S-ss-t!" he whispered. "What are you doing? Don't light a cigarette!"

His companion's voice sounded aggrieved. "Why not? Nobody can see it up here."

"It's orders, that's all."

"And, anyway," grumbled the other, "it's two o'clock in the morning. Our bloke's not coming tonight: that's certain. Unless he's already gone in by the back door?"

"Lewes is covering the back door and the other side. Listen!"

He held up his hand. Nothing stirred in the valley. There was no noise except, far away, the faint drag and thunder of the surf at Lynmouth.

It was mellow September weather, yet the man with the field-glasses, Detective-Inspector Ballard, of the Special Branch attached to the Metropolitan Police, felt an unaccountable shiver. Lifting the glasses again, he raked the path leading up to the cottage. He looked at the lighted window. Beyond the edge of a cretonne curtain, he could just make out a part of the bony profile, the thick spectacles, the fishlike movements of the mouth, as Dr. Meyer filled page after page of neat handwriting.

"If you ask me," grumbled Sergeant Buck, "the A.C.'s barking up the wrong tree this time. This Meyer is a distinguished scientist—a real refugee—"

"No."

"But where's your evidence?"

"In cases of this kind," returned Ballard, lowering the glasses to rub his aching eyes, "you can't afford to go by the rules of legal evidence. The A.C. isn't sure; but he thinks the tip-off came from Meyer's wife."

Sergeant Buck whistled.

"A good German hausfrau tip off the English?"

"That's just it. She's not German: she's English. There are some very funny things going on in this country at the moment, my lad. If we can nab the man who's coming to see Meyer tonight, we'll catch somebody high up. We can—"

"Listen!" said Buck.

It was unnecessary to ask anyone to listen. The report of the firearm crashed and rolled in that little valley. It was an illusion, but Ballard almost imagined he could hear the wiry whing of the bullet.

Both men jumped to their feet. Ballard, his knee-joints painful from their cramped position, whisked up the glasses again and scanned the front of the cottage. His gaze came to rest on the window.

"Poachers?" suggested Buck.

"That was no poacher," said Inspector Ballard. "That was an Army rifle. And it didn't miss either. Come on!"

The pigmy picture rose in his mind as he scrambled down the hill: the flutter of the cretonne curtain, the bald head fallen forward across

the desk. Neither he nor Buck made any effort at concealment. The echoes hardly seemed to have settled in the valley when they arrived in front of the house. Holding his companion back, Ballard pointed.

The lighted window was not far up from the ground. First of all Ballard noticed the bullet-hole in the glass, close to the lead joining of one of the diamond-panes. It was a neatly drilled hole, with hardly any starring of the glass, such as is made by a smallish, high-velocity rifle-bullet (say a .256) fired from some distance away.

Then they both saw what was inside, lying limply across the desk with a mark on the left temple; and they both hurried for the front door.

The door-knocker was stiff and rusty, giving only a padded sound which Ballard had to supplement by banging his fist on the door. It seemed interminable minutes before the bar was drawn back on the inside, and the door opened.

A white-faced woman, carrying a paraffin lamp and with a dressing-gown hastily pulled round her, peered out at them. She was perhaps thirty-five, some ten or fifteen years younger than Ludwig Meyer. Though not pretty, she was attractive in a pink-and-white fashion; blue-eyed, with heavy, rich-brushed fair hair over her shoulders.

"Mrs. Meyer?"

"Yes?" She moistened her lips.

"We're police officers, ma'am. I'm afraid something has happened to your husband."

Slowly Harriet Meyer held up the lamp. Just as slowly, she turned round and looked towards the door of the room on the right of the hall. The lamp wobbled in her hand, its golden light spilling and breaking among shadows.

"I—I heard it," she said. "I wondered."

Gritting her teeth, she turned round and walked towards the door of that room. With a word of apology Ballard brushed past her.

"Well," said Sergeant Buck, after a pause, "there's nothing we can do for him, sir."

There was not. They stood in a long, low-ceilinged room, its walls lined with improvised bookshelves. The smell of burning oil from the lamp on the desk by the window competed with a fog of rank tobacco-smoke. A long china-bowled pipe lay on the desk near the dead man's hand. The fountain pen had slipped from his fingers. His face and shoulders lay against the paper-strewn desk; but, as the creaking of their footsteps jarred the floor, he slowly slid off and fell with an unnerving thump on his side. It was a grotesque mimicry of life which made Harriet Meyer cry out.

"Steady, ma'am," said Ballard.

Circling the body, he went to the window and tried to peer out. But in the dazzle between lamp and moonlight he could see nothing. The

bullet-hole in the glass, he noted, had tiny splinters—the little shell-shaped grooves on the edge of the opening—which showed that the bullet had been fired from outside.

Inspector Ballard drew a deep breath and turned round.

"Tell us about it, ma'am," he said.

Late on the following afternoon, Colonel Penderel sat in a wicker chair on the lawn before The Red Lodge, and looked gloomily at his shoes.

Everything about Red Lodge, like Colonel Penderel himself, was of a brushed trimness. The lawn was of that smooth green which seems to have lighter stripes in it; the house, of mellow red brick under mellow September sunshine, opened friendly doors to all the world.

But Hubert Penderel, a long lean man with big shoes, and wiry wintry-looking hair like his cropped moustache, slouched down in the chair. He clenched his big-knuckled fist, stared at it, and brought it down on the arm of the chair. Then he glanced round—and stopped guiltily as he caught sight of a brown-haired girl in a sleeveless white tennis-frock, who had just come round the side of the house with a tennis racket under her arm.

The girl did not hesitate. She studied him for a moment, out of blue eyes wide-spaced above a short straight nose. A colored silk scarf was tied round her head. Then she marched across the lawn, swinging the tennis racket as though she were going to hit somebody with it.

"Daddy," she said abruptly, "what on earth is it?"

Colonel Penderel said nothing.

"There is something," she insisted. "There has been, ever since that police-superintendent came here this morning. What is it? Have you been getting into trouble with your car again?"

Colonel Penderel raised his head.

"Professor Meyer's been shot," he answered with equal abruptness. "Somebody plugged him through the window last night with a .303 service-rifle. —Nancy, how would you like to see your old man arrested for murder?"

He had tried to say the last words whimsically. But he was not a very good actor, and his conception of the whimsical was somewhat heavy-handed.

Nancy Penderel backed away.

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"Fact," said the Colonel, giving a slight flick to his shoulders. He peered round the lawn, hunching up his shoulders. "That superintendent (Willet, his name is) wanted to know if I owned a rifle. I said yes: the one we all used to shoot with, on our own range. He said, where was it kept? I said, in the garden-shed. He said, could he see it? I said, certainly."

Nancy was having difficulty in adjusting her wits to this.

"He said, can I borrow this?" the Colonel concluded, hunching up his shoulders still further, and avoiding her eye. "He took it away with him. It can't be the rifle that killed Meyer. But if by any chance it should happen to be—?"

"Dr. Meyer?" Nancy breathed. "Dr. Meyer dead?"

Colonel Penderel jumped to his feet.

"I didn't like the blighter." His tone was querulous. "Everybody knows it. We had a rare old row only three days ago. Not because he was a German, mind. After all, I've got a German staying here as my guest, haven't I? But—well, there it is. And another thing. That garden-shed has a Yale lock. I've got the only key."

There was another wicker chair near her father's. Nancy groped across to it, and sat down.

She felt no sense of danger or tragedy. It was merely that she could not understand. It was as though, in the midst of a dinner, the cloth were suddenly twitched off and all the dishes with their contents overturned.

It was a pleasant afternoon. She had just finished playing three sets of tennis with Carl Kuhn. There couldn't, she assured herself, be anything really wrong: nothing that could blacken the daylight or spoil her week. Yet she watched her father tramping up and down the lawn, in his old chequered brown-and-black sports coat, more disturbed than she had ever seen him.

"But it's absurd!" Nancy cried. "We can't take it seriously. Everybody knows you. The local police know you."

"Ah," said Colonel Penderel. "Yes. The local police know me. But the fellows who've taken this over aren't local. They're down here from Scotland Yard."

"Scotland Yard?"

"Special Branch. Look here, mouse." He approached closer, and lowered his voice. "Keep this under your hat. Don't mention it to your mother, whatever you do. But this fellow Meyer was a wrong 'un. A spy."

"Impossible! That dodderly little man?"

"Fact. Willet wouldn't say much, naturally. But I did gather they've got the goods on him, and his papers prove it. Damn it, you can't trust anybody nowadays, can you?"

Colonel Penderel's face darkened. He rubbed his hands together with a dry, rustling sound.

"If that's what he was—I say, good luck to the man who plugged him! But I didn't do it. Can you imagine me sneaking up on a man (that's what worries me, mouse) and letting drive at him when he wasn't looking?"

"No, of course not." Nancy was beginning to reflect. "If anybody killed him, I'm betting it was that simpering blonde wife of his."

"Harriet Meyer? Great Scott, no!"

"Why not? She's fifteen years younger than he is. And they live all alone in that house, without even a maid to help with the work."

Colonel Penderel was honest enough not to pursue this. He shook his head.

"There are reasons why not, mouse. Which you might understand, or you might not. . . ."

"Daddy, stop treating me like a child! Why couldn't she have done it?"

"First, because the bullet that killed Meyer came from outside. Second, because there were Special Branch men watching every side of the house, and nobody went out or in at any time—certainly not Harriet Meyer. Third, they made an immediate search of the house, and there was no weapon in it except an old 16-bore shotgun which couldn't possibly have fired a rifle-bullet."

"S-s-s-t!" said Nancy warningly.

Colonel Penderel whirled round.

The latch of the front gate was being lifted. Detective-Inspector Ballard, nondescript and fortyish, might have been any business man; but to the two watchers he had policeman written all over him. He came up the brick path smiling pleasantly, and raised his hat.

And, at the same time, Carl Kuhn strolled out of the open front door.

Carl Kuhn, in his late twenties, was one of those teutonic types which seem all the more Nordic for being dark instead of fair. He was a middle-sized, stockily-built, amiable young man with a ruddy complexion and a vast fund of chuckles. His heavy black hair grew low on his forehead; a narrow moustache followed the line of his wide mouth. Wearing white flannels, a sports coat, and a silk scarf, he came sauntering across the lawn to put his hands on the back of Nancy's chair.

But nobody looked at him.

"Good afternoon," Ballard said pleasantly. "Colonel Penderel?"

"I am Colonel Penderel," said the owner of that name, looking very hard at him. "This is my daughter. And Mr. Kuhn."

Ballard gave them a brief glance.

"Colonel Penderel, I am a police-officer investigating the murder of Dr. Ludwig Meyer," continued Ballard; and Kuhn, who had started to light a cigarette, flicked up his head and blew two jets of smoke through his nostrils like an amiable dragon. "I wonder if I could have a word with you in private, sir?"

"Say it," said the Colonel.

"Pardon?"

"If you've got anything to say to me," pursued the Colonel, sitting down deliberately and taking tight hold of the arms of the chair, "say it. Here. Now. In front of these people."

"You're sure that's what you'd prefer, sir?"

"Yes."

Ballard's own deliberate gaze moved round the group. He took a notebook out of his pocket.

"Well, sir, you own a rifle. This morning you loaned that rifle to Superintendent Willet.

"Yes?"

"Certain tests," said Ballard, "were made with this .303 rifle by the ballistics-consultant to the Devonshire County Constabulary." He looked at his notebook. "Number of grooves: five and a half. Direction of twist: right-hand. Individual markings—" Never mind the technicalities, though." His manner remained expressionless, almost kindly. "The fact is, sir, that the bullet which killed Dr. Meyer was fired from your rifle."

From behind the house came the drowsy whir of a lawn-mower.

Not even yet had Nancy Penderel a full sense of danger or even death. The sheer incredibility of the thing flooded her mind. She thought of the garden-shed by the tennis-court; and of the miniature rifle-range, sandbags backed by sheet-iron, which her father had constructed at the end of the meadow.

"I see," observed Colonel Penderel. His manner was stiff and impassive. He lifted one hand as though to whack it down on the arm of the chair, but he lowered it gently instead. "Someone stole it, then. Or—am I by any chance under arrest?"

Ballard smiled, though his eyes did not move.

"Hardly that, sir. All we know is that your rifle was used."

Throughout this, Carl Kuhn had been shifting from one foot to the other as though in a hopping agony of indecision. He took short, quick puffs at his cigarette.

"You are not saying," he exploded, in English not far from perfect, "that this man Meyer was shot yesterday afternoon?"

Ballard glanced at him quickly.

"Yesterday afternoon? What makes you say that?"

"Because," returned Kuhn, "yesterday afternoon I took a walk in the direction of that house. It is not more than a quarter of a mile from here. And I heard a rifle-shot. I looked over the edge of the hill, and saw this Meyer standing in front of the house. He seemed very angry. But he was not dead then. No, no, no!"

He illustrated this story by cupping his hands over his eyes, and other elaborate gestures. Ballard stared at him.

"But what did you do, sir? Didn't you go closer to see what had happened?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"His blood," said Kuhn, holding himself very stiffly, "wass not my blood. His race wass not my race. I would have nothing to do with him. But there!" Kuhn's tension relaxed, and he smiled. "Not to talk politics in this house we have agreed. Is it not so, Colonel Penderel?"

"Yes, it's so," admitted the Colonel, shifting. "I didn't care anything about the fellow's race or politics. I just didn't like him." He eyed Ballard. "I suppose you've heard all about that?"

Ballard was silent for a moment.

"Knowledge hereabouts is pretty general, sir. Is it true that on Tuesday you threatened to kill him?"

The Colonel went rather white.

"I threatened to wring his neck, if that's what you mean?"

"Why?"

"I didn't like his manners. He browbeat the tradespeople and threw his weight about wherever he went. He was supposed to have come out of Germany penniless, but he had everything he wanted. At a garden-party here on Tuesday—when my wife was trying to conciliate him—he said calmly that the English had no taste, no education, no manners, and no knowledge of science."

"Ach, so?" murmured Kuhn.

"I didn't say anything at the time. I just walked part of the way home with him, and told him a few things. There was a hell of a row, yes."

"Oh, this is absurd!" Nancy protested; but Ballard very gently and persuasively silenced her.

"Dr. Meyer," Ballard said without comment, "was shot at about two o'clock in the morning, with a rifle taken from the garden-shed here. . . ."

"Which was locked," said the Colonel stonily, "and to which I've got the only key."

"Daddy!" cried Nancy.

"And," persisted the Colonel, "at two o'clock in the morning I was asleep. I don't sleep in the same room as my wife; and I can't produce an alibi. Furthermore, the rifle was in that shed as late as nine o'clock in the evening; I know, because I put away the garden-sprinkler then. The window won't open and there's no way into the shed except by the door. Now you know everything. But I didn't kill Meyer."

Ballard was about to speak when there was an interruption.

Round the side of the house, at a blundering and near-sighted gait, lumbered a twenty-stone man in a white linen suit. He wore eyeglasses

on a broad black ribbon, carried a crutch-handled stick, and seemed to be muttering down the slope of his several chins.

Colonel Penderel jumped up.

"Fell!" he shouted. "Gideon Fell! What in the name of sanity are you doing here?"

Dr. Fell woke up. He beamed all over his face like Old King Cole. He swept off his broad-brimmed white hat and ducked them a sort of bow. Then, wheezing gently after the exertion of this, he scowled.

"I trust," he said, "you will forgive my informal entrance by way of the back garden. I was—ahem—examining your miniature rifle-range."

Inspector Ballard intervened quickly.

"You're acquainted with Dr. Fell, Colonel?"

"Lord, yes! One of my oldest . . . Here, sit down! Have a drink. Have something. You don't happen to have heard what's going on here, do you?"

Dr. Fell seemed uncomfortable.

"Not to put too fine a point on it," he answered, "yes. I came down here to discuss a point of practical science, the use of thermite in a safe-breaking case, with Dr. Meyer. My second visit. I find him—" He spread out his hand, widening the fingers. "Sir Herbert Armstrong wired to ask if I would—um—lend a little consulting assistance."

"Glad of any help, sir," smiled Ballard.

"Not as glad as I am," said the Colonel. "You see, Fell, they think I did it."

"Nonsense!" roared Dr. Fell.

"Well, what do you think?"

A mulish expression overspread Dr. Fell's face.

"Proverbs," he said. "Proverbs! I don't know. Before I express my opinion, there are two things about which I must have some information. I must know all about the wildcat and the moss."

They stared at him.

"The what, sir?" demanded Inspector Ballard.

"The wildcat," said Dr. Fell, "and the moss."

Grunting acceptance of the chair which Colonel Penderel set out for him, he lowered his vast bulk into it. He got out a red bandana handkerchief and mopped his face.

"When I last visited Dr. Meyer," he went on, "I noticed on the mantelpiece in his study a big figure of a stuffed wildcat."

"That's right," agreed the Colonel.

"But when I went there today, the wildcat was gone. I asked Mrs. Meyer about this, and she informed me that three days ago he took the stuffed wildcat out into the garden and burned it."

"Burned it? Why should he do that?"

"Precisely," said Dr. Fell, flourishing the handkerchief, "the shrewd, crafty question I asked myself. Why? Then there is the question of the moss. Somebody has been pulling up large quantities of moss from the vicinity of that house."

It was Nancy Penderel's first sight of the man about whom she had heard so much from her father. Her first impulse, on seeing Dr. Fell, was to laugh. She looked again, and was not so sure.

"Mark you," the doctor went on suddenly, "it was always dry moss. Very dry moss. The picker would have no traffic with anything damp. Archons of Athens! If only—"

He shook his head, sunk deep in mazy meditations. Inspector Ballard hesitated.

"Are you sure either of those two things has any bearing on the matter, sir?"

"Not at all. But we must look for some clue or retire to Bedlam. My first thought, of course, was that the stuffed wildcat might have been used as a kind of safe: a receptacle for papers. Since our evidence proves that Dr. Meyer was a German espionage-agent. . . ."

"S-s-t!" warned Inspector Ballard.

But Dr. Fell merely blinked at him.

"My good sir,"—he spoke with some testiness,—"you can't keep it dark. Everybody in North Devon knows about it. At the pub, where I had the pleasure of lowering several pints before coming on here, the talk was of nothing else. Somebody has been industriously spreading it."

He looked thoughtful.

"But observe! Dr. Meyer burns the safe, but leaves the papers. A version (I suppose) of locking the stable door after the horse is stolen. And a rolling stone gathers no moss. And—" He blinked at Carl Kuhn. "You, sir. You are the other German I've heard so much about?"

Kuhn had been shifting excitedly from one foot to the other. His color was higher. His surprise seemed deep and genuine. Once he made a gesture like one who removes an invisible hat and stands to attention.

"At your service, Doctor," he said.

Dr. Fell scowled. "You're not providing us with still another proverb, I hope?"

"Another proverb?"

"That birds of a feather flock together?"

Kuhn was very serious. "No. I regret what has happened. I deeply regret it. But—do not judge too harshly. Such tasks are often glorious. I misjudged him."

Colonel Penderel stared at him. So did Nancy. She had a confused idea that her ordered world was crumpling round her.

"Glorious!" she repeated. "That little worm was a spy, doing heaven knows what, and you say 'such things are often glorious?'"

Kuhn's color was still higher.

"Perhaps I express myself badly in English."

"No, you don't, either! You've spent half your life in England. I've known you since you were ten years old. You're more English than German anyway."

"I regret, no," said Kuhn. "I am a German." He drew himself up, but his anxious eyes regarded first Nancy and then the Colonel. "This does not interfere with our long friendship?"

"Hanged if I know what it does," muttered Colonel Penderel, after a pause. "It seems to me we've got a parable here instead of a proverb; but never mind. What I do know is that we're in an unholy mess." He frowned. "You didn't happen to kill Meyer yourself, did you?"

"Is it likely?" Kuhn asked simply.

"Don't you think," said Nancy, "you've got rather a nerve?"

"Little one, you do not understand!" Kuhn seemed in agony. "Ach, now, let us forget this! It is no business of ours. Instead they should inquire who was firing at Herr Meyer yesterday afternoon—"

Dr. Fell spoke in such a sharp voice that they all swung round.

"What's that? Who was firing at him yesterday afternoon?"

Kuhn repeated his story. As he did so, Inspector Ballard's expression was one of growing suspicion; but Dr. Fell, with a sort of half-witted enlightenment dawning in his eyes, merely shaded those eyes with his hand.

"How did you happen to be there, Mr. Kuhn?" asked Ballard.

"I was going for a walk. That is all."

"In the direction of Professor Meyer's house?"

"No, no, that was quite by chance. Man must go somewhere when he walks."

"A point," observed Dr. Fell, "which is sometimes open to dispute. And last night?"

"Now that is very odd." Suddenly Kuhn knocked his knuckles against his forehead. "I had forgotten. Excuse. You say that Herr Meyer was shot at two o'clock in the morning?"

"Yes."

"Towser!" said Kuhn with powerful relief. "The dog! He was restless! He kept barking!"

"That's true," breathed Nancy.

"So! Listen to me. I was disturbed. I could not sleep. Finally I rise to my feet and put my head out of the window. I saw McCabe, the gardener, going along the path in his dressing-gown. I called and asked if he could quiet the dog, and he said he was going to do it. The stable-clock, I heard, was just striking two."

There was a silence. Kuhn's anxious eyes turned towards the Inspector.

"I see," said Ballard, making a note. "Alibi, eh?"

"If you wish to call it so, yes. The man McCabe will tell you what I say is true. It was bright moonlight: I saw him and he saw me."

"Inspector," remarked Dr. Fell, without taking his hand away from his eyes, "I think you'd better accept that."

"Accept the alibi?"

"Yes," said Dr. Fell. With infinite labor he propelled himself to his feet on his crutch-handled stick. "Because it isn't necessary. I know how Professor Meyer really died. As a matter of fact, you told me."

"I told you?" repeated Ballard.

"And if you'd care to come with me to the house," pursued Dr. Fell, "I think I can show you." He looked curiously at Colonel Penderel. "If I remember correctly, my lad, you used to be something of an authority on firearms. You'd better come along too."

"Is the answer," asked Colonel Penderel, "as easy as that?"

"The answer," said Dr. Fell, "is another proverb."

In late afternoon light, the timbered cottage in the valley stood deserted and rather sinister. The bullet-hole in the diamond-paned glass looked itself like a scar on a body.

Repeated knockings on the door roused nobody. Dr. Fell tried the knob, and found that it was open. He beckoned Inspector Ballard inside for a short whispered conference, after which the Inspector disappeared. Then Dr. Fell, his face very red, invited the other three in.

Colonel Penderel walked in boldly. Nancy and Carl Kuhn followed with more hesitation. The German was obviously upset, and muttered something to himself as he crossed the threshold.

In the long, low-ceilinged study there was still a smell of stale tobacco-smoke. Ludwig Meyer's body had been removed. Of his murder there now remained no trace except a spot of brown, dried blood on the papers which littered his desk. They were the sheets of his latest scientific treatise, which he would not now complete.

Dr. Fell, his underlip drawn up over his bandit's moustache, stood in the doorway. His eyes moved left towards the mantelpiece in the narrower wall of the oblong, and right towards the window in the wall facing it. He lumbered across to the desk, where he turned round.

"Here," he said tapping the desk, "is where Meyer was sitting. Here,"—he picked up a few sheets of manuscript, and dropped them,—"is Meyer's last book. Here,"—he drew open a drawer of the desk,—"was the evidence which proved, so very obviously, that Meyer was an espionage-agent. By thunder, but wasn't it obvious!"

He closed the drawer with a bang. Only the sun entered. The bang

of the drawer shook and disturbed dust-motes against the sunlight. Dr. Fell reached across and fingered the cretonne curtain. It was very warm in here, so warm that Nancy Penderel's head swam.

"I have a particular question to ask," continued Dr. Fell. He looked at the Colonel. "Why is everybody so sure that the bullet which killed Meyer was fired from your rifle?"

Colonel Penderel put a hand to his forehead.

"See here, Fell," he began querulously, but checked himself. "It was fired from my rifle, wasn't it?"

"Oh, yes. I merely ask the question. Why is everyone so sure of that?"

"Because of the distinctive marks of rifling left on the bullet," returned the other.

"True. Palpably and painfully true. Harrumph. Now, then: you've built a miniature rifle-range in the meadow behind your house, haven't you?"

"You ought to know," retorted the Colonel, regarding him with some exasperation. "You said you'd been looking at it."

"And what do you use to catch the bullets there?"

"Soft sand."

"So that," said Dr. Fell, "the many rounds fired into that sand would be lying about all over the place?"

"Yes."

"Yes. And each bullet, though keeping exactly its original shape, would bear the distinctive marking of your rifle. Wouldn't it?"

The door of the study banged open, making them all jump. Inspector Ballard entered and gave Dr. Fell a significant glance, and nodded.

Dr. Fell drew a deep breath, shutting his eyes for a moment before he went on.

"You see," he said, "this crime is very much more ingenious than it looks. A certain person who is listening to me now has created something of an artistic masterpiece.

"Those bullets, for instance. A bullet, selected for its most distinctive markings, could be fished out of that soft sand. It could easily be fitted into a loaded cartridge-case and fired again. Couldn't it?"

"Not without . . ." Colonel Penderel began, but Dr. Fell stopped him.

"Then there is this question of the window-curtain." The doctor leaned across and flicked it with his thumb and forefinger. But he was not looking at it; he was looking at Inspector Ballard.

"You, Inspector, were watching this house last night with a pair of field-glasses. On the second the shot was fired, you jumped up and focussed your glasses on this window. At least, so you told me this morning?"

"Yes, sir. That's right."

"And, when the shot was fired, you saw this curtain flutter. Is that correct too?"

In Ballard's mind the picture returned with sharp clearness of light and shadow. He nodded.

"It is a flat impossibility," said Dr. Fell, "for any shot fired from some distance away outside a closed window to agitate a curtain inside that window. There is only one thing which could have caused it: the expansion of gases from the muzzle of a firearm when the shot was fired in this room."

Supporting himself on his stick, he lumbered across to the door, which was an inch or two open. He opened it fully into the little hall.

Just outside, her fingers pressed to her cheeks, stood Harriet Meyer. Her startled expression, with the upper lip slightly lifted to expose the teeth, was caught as though by a camera.

"Come in, Mrs. Meyer," said Dr. Fell. "Will you tell us how you killed your husband, or shall I?"

She struck out at him with a slap like a cat's. When he tried to catch her arm, she backed away swiftly to the other side of the room. There she stood against the bookshelves: her blue eyes as shallow as a doll's, but her breast rising and falling heavily.

Again Dr. Fell drew a weary breath.

"Colonel Penderel," he continued, "will tell you that a .303 bullet can be fired from a 16-bore shotgun, such as the one in this house. When you say it 'can't possibly' be done, you don't really mean that. What you mean is that it can't be fired without leaving traces, and it can't be fired with accuracy.

"But accuracy, at more or less point-blank range, isn't necessary. And there is one way of firing it, out of a smooth-barrelled shotgun, so that it leaves no traces. You'll find that method fully outlined in Gross's *Criminal Investigation*."

Colonel Penderel's eyes opened wide, and then narrowed.

"Moss!" he said. "By the Lord Harry, dry moss! I must have been half-witted. Wrap the bullet in dry moss. It doesn't touch the inside of the gun, and no marks are left. The combustion ignites and destroys the moss: so that there's nothing left except a fouled barrel. When I was musketry instructor . . ."

Nancy was pointing wordlessly to the window.

Dr. Fell nodded again.

"Oh, yes," he agreed, contemplating the bullet-hole. "Made yesterday afternoon, as you've guessed. Made by a bullet out of a real rifle, probably a .256. Made, of course, to set the stage.

"While her husband was occupied elsewhere, this lady calculated all

angles, stood back some distance, and fired a clean hole through the window—lodging the bullet in a stuffed wildcat on the mantelpiece. If you will just note the line of fire, here, you'll see what happened.

"She could explain to Professor Meyer that she had been practicing, and made a wild shot. We can't blame him for being 'enraged.' But it was an accident. Later she could burn the stuffed figure and hide the rifle outside the house. Then she was ready for real business that night.

"She and her husband lived alone here. There was nobody to notice that inconspicuous hole in the window—until the time came for it to be noticed. There would be (as she had arranged) police-officers round the house, to trap a mythical spy-head who was supposed to be calling on Dr. Meyer. They would not come close until they heard a shot. But when they heard a shot, it would be too late."

Still Harriet Meyer had not spoken. Her eyes, with the poised look of one who cannot decide whether to fight or run, moved round the room.

"She had only," said Dr. Fell, "to walk in here. Meyer would turn round (you note the position of the door) so that his left temple would be exposed. Any after-smell of smokeless powder, which is very slight, would go unnoticed in the fog of rank tobacco-smoke.

"The crime was all outlined for her, of course. In any good German scientist's house you are likely to find a copy of Hans Gross's *System der Kriminalistik*. There's one, I think, in the shelf just over her head now."

They heard Harriet Meyer's fingernails scratch against the books. Two voices spoke almost together.

"Frau Meyer—" began Kuhn.

"But she's English!" cried Nancy.

"Of course she is," said Dr. Fell, and rapped the ferrule of his stick sharply against the floor. "Confound it, don't you realize that's what makes her so dangerous?"

Harriet Meyer threw back her head and laughed.

"Don't you see," thundered Dr. Fell, "that poor old Meyer, objectionable as he was, wasn't a spy at all? That he was just what he pretended to be? That this charming lady here, a convert to what some call the modern ideology, was the real spy?"

"The Special Branch thought they were hot on Meyer's track, because all trails led to his house. They were getting too close. So she had to sacrifice him. She tipped off the police and planned Meyer's murder, leaving incriminating evidence which was far too incriminating to be true, and bringing the police themselves as witnesses to her innocence. By thunder, I rather admire her!"

Harriet Meyer was still laughing. But it was a choked, vicious sort of laughter which turned her listeners cold. And it stopped, with a whis-

tlung inhalation of breath, as Inspector Ballard walked slowly across towards her.

Her eyes searched him. Then she seemed to make up her mind. She straightened up, her heels together. Her hand flashed outwards, palm uppermost, in salute. Then, striking at him with the same hand, she lowered her head and ran for the door.

Dr. Fell seized Ballard's arm.

"Let her go," he said quietly. "The house is surrounded. She won't get far. You have that shotgun safely locked up?"

"Yes; but—"

"The traces of burnt moss in the barrel should be good enough. These clever people usually overlook something."

The room was very hot. Again Dr. Fell got out his bandanna handkerchief and mopped his face. Carl Kuhn hurried across to the window and peered out.

"You would not," said Dr. Fell softly, "you would not like her to get away?"

"I cannot say," said Kuhn, whose face had lost its color. "I do not know. She is a compatriot of yours, not mine. It is none of my affair."

Dr. Fell stowed away his handkerchief.

"Sir," he said gravely, "I know nothing against you. I believe you to be an honest man."

Kuhn ducked his head, and his heels came together.

"Even if you were not, you fly your own colors and present yourself for what you are. But there,"—he pointed his stick in the direction Harriet Meyer had taken,—"*there goes a portent and a warning.* The alien we can deal with. But the hypnotized zealot among ourselves, the bat and the owl and the mole who would ruin us with the best intentions, is another thing. It has happened before. It may happen again. It is what we have to fear; and, by the grace of God, *all we have to fear!*"

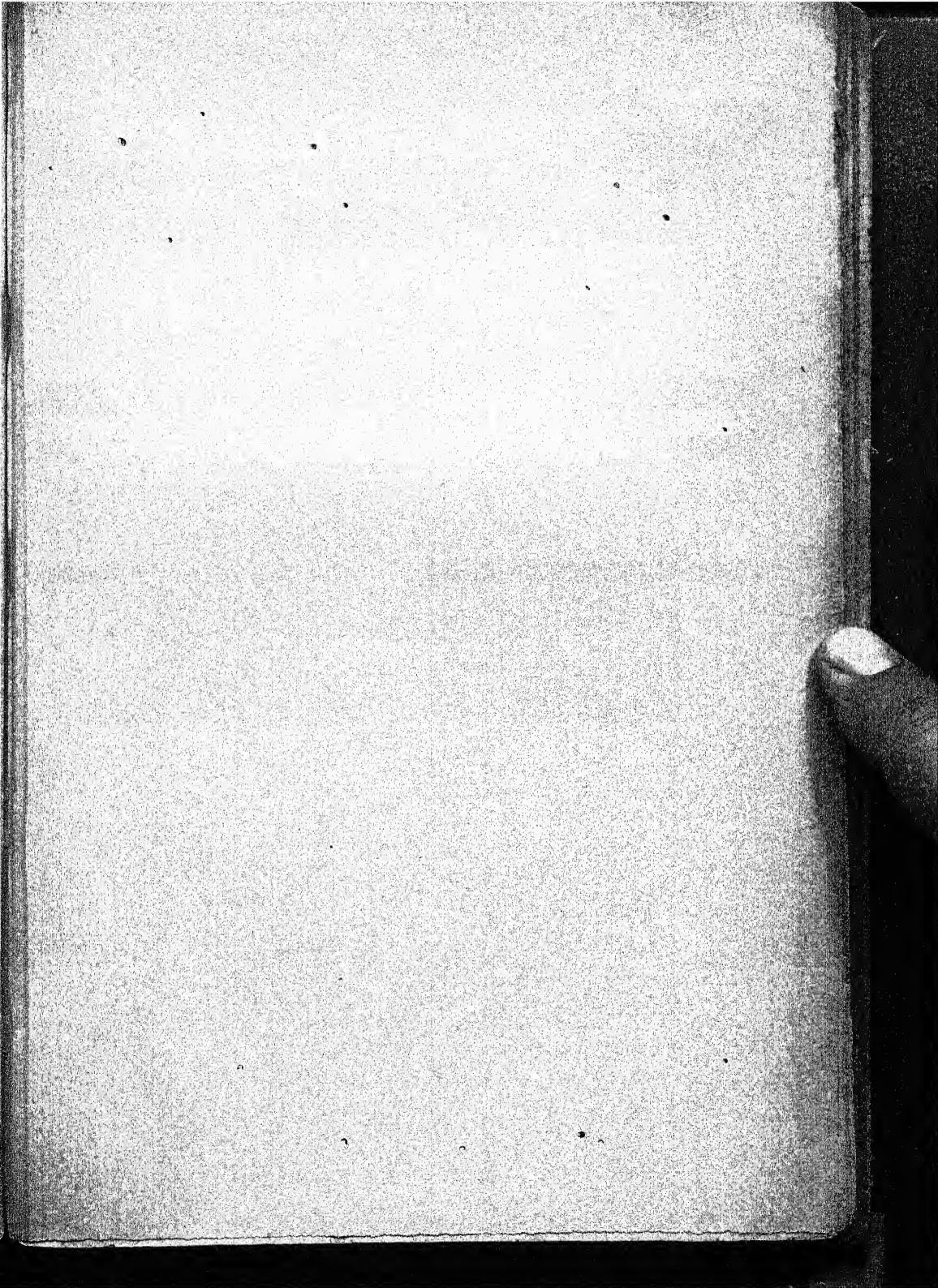
In silence he put on his broad-brimmed white hat.

"And now you must excuse me," he added, "I have no relish for cases such as this."

"I said it was Harriet," Nancy told him, in a voice hardly above a whisper. "I always thought she was queerer than he was. And yet, you know, I didn't *really* think so either. What did you mean when you told us the answer to this whole business was a proverb?"

Dr. Fell made a hideous face.

"Oh, that?" he said. "I wondered if she might be our quarry when I heard about her denouncing her husband to the police. Haven't I heard somewhere that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?"



FRANK GRUBER

Speed, action, and humor are the distinguishing marks of a large number of young mystery-writers who may be designated as graduates of the hard-boiled school of fiction founded by Dashiell Hammett. The action is machine-gun paced and violent, the prose economical and astringent, the humor profane and of the wisecracking variety. The net effect of these contemporary literary virtues is an impact rather like the kick of a mule. Our best practitioner in this department of national letters is Dashiell Hammett, who founded the department, but one of his brightest followers is young Frank Gruber, creator of Johnny Fletcher and Sam Cragg, two very unconventional sleuths, and Simon Lash, a sleuth even more unconventional than Johnny and Sam. Mr. Gruber wrote our next story, *Death on Post No. 7*, a fast-moving story of espionage in one of Uncle Sam's army camps, which you are pretty certain to finish at a sitting. Lieutenant Shannon, the ex-cop, is a new and likable Gruber creation; it would be nice to know more about him as time goes on.

DEATH ON POST NO. 7

WHEN That Man drew Number 158 out of the old kettle, it didn't worry Danny Higgins one bit. He was right all the way down the line. He'd voted the straight ticket and he made book for some of the best people in the city. Besides which, his Uncle Oscar—Oskey Higgins—was captain of the 11th Precinct.

No, sir, they weren't going to draft Danny Higgins.

So when they blew the bugle that first morning, Danny pulled the blankets over his head and muttered, "Let the damn place burn down."

A moment later a rough hand tore the blankets away and a voice resembling that of Barnacle Bill, the sailor, roared into his ear: "Rise and shine, recruit!"

Danny blinked at the lantern-jawed soldier, who had three stripes and a diamond on his shirt sleeve.

"Scram, buddy!" he demanded. "Can't a man sleep around here without everybody making a racket?"

An unholy light glowed in the eyes of the man with the three stripes and the diamond on his shirt. "Jeepers, mister," he said in a tense, sub-

dued tone, "I didn't mean to wake you up. Cripes, no! If I'd known it was you, I'd have brung you your breakfast in bed, you . . .!" The words he said from that point on brought Danny Higgins wide awake.

He peeled bushels of potatoes that day. He washed thousands of dishes and he mopped acres of floors. He waited on tables in the mess hall and he washed some more dishes. He kept that up until around nine o'clock in the evening and then they turned off the lights before he could even undress for bed.

The second day he became an orderly—a latrine orderly. Along about the middle of the afternoon the man with the stripes and the diamond on his shirt came downstairs and said to Danny:

"Well, how do you like the army now, buddy?"

Danny told him. The top sergeant listened with interest until Danny was out of breath, then he smiled pleasantly and swung. The blow didn't hurt. You don't feel a 75 either if it explodes right over your head.

But Danny Higgins had bad dreams. A bunch of blacksmiths were using his head for an anvil. After a while they got tired and a squad of little red devils took their places. Their miniature hammers didn't hurt as much as the sledges of the smithies, but there were more of them and, when they stopped with their hammers and began poking little pitchforks into Danny, he didn't like it at all. He opened his eyes and the little red devils disappeared. But streaks of pain still lanced through his head.

He lay still for a moment, staring at the ceiling of the latrine. So this was the army! Well, they could have it. He, Danny Higgins, was getting out. Right now!

He climbed to his knees and paused there while he shook his head to clear away some of the buzzing. Then he gained his feet.

For a moment he debated whether he should go up to the squad room and change from his dungarees to the crummy O. D.'s they'd dished him out just two days ago. He decided on the dungarees. He wouldn't have to go farther than Cow Hollow, just outside the reservation gates. There were a dozen fellows out there who'd help him—fellows he'd done favors for in the past.

He left the latrine by the rear door, stepping into a short, darkened corridor off which were storerooms. The corridor was dark, but a crack of light seeped through one of the storeroom doors that wasn't entirely closed. Danny's eyes went automatically to the crack as he passed. He stopped and put his eye to it.

The door was jerked open in his face, the light inside winked out—and lights exploded in Danny's head. *For the second time within ten minutes.*

He went down, but this time he didn't go out. Not entirely. He heard feet pound up the corridor and clatter on the stairs.

Rage and humiliation brought Danny to his feet. He continued to the end of the corridor, climbed the stairs and burst into the kitchen. A cook and several K. P.'s stared at him. Danny had no word for them. He passed through the kitchen and left the barracks.

He did not even look back. He was through with the army. He walked to the end of the alley, head hunched on shoulders, hands thrust savagely into the pockets of his dungarees.

He turned left into a company street and almost bumped into a soldier. He muttered an apology and started past, "but the soldier snapped at him:

"Hold on there!"

The authoritative note in the soldier's tone stopped Danny. He turned and his eyes caught polished leather boots. Boots spelled officer to Danny, but in his present mood he didn't give a damn if the officer was the commanding general himself.

"Ten-shun!" snapped the officer. "Don't you know enough to salute an officer?"

Danny's eyes finally came up to meet the officer's face. Then they almost popped from his head.

"Shannon!" he gasped.

The officer inhaled softly. "Danny Higgins!" Then uncontrollable laughter shook him. "Danny Higgins! They caught Danny Higgins. There is justice, after all."

"Cut it, Shannon," snarled Danny Higgins. "It ain't funny. Not to me. Anyway, I'm shaking the army. They can't knock me around. I don't have to take it."

Shannon's steel-blue eyes narrowed. "What're you talking about, Danny? You've got a year to go. There isn't anything you can do to get out a day sooner. You ought to know that. You probably pulled all the wires you could trying to keep out—and it didn't do you any good."

"They double-crossed me," Danny said passionately. "They told me I'd get a soft job, and look what they've had me doing—washing dishes and peeling potatoes. And cleaning toilets! Then on top of that they belt me around."

"Who did?"

"That lousy straw boss, the one they call Sergeant Slattery."

"He hit you?"

"D'you think I got this blinker playing post office?"

"Noncoms don't hit privates in the army officially, Danny. They're not allowed to. You must have done something to provoke him."

"I didn't do anything except tell him what I thought of this man's army. That's all. Then he popped me."

"Oh!" Shannon said in relief. "It was unofficial, then. That's different."

"Oh, is it? And what about the other bird who hit me? The one with his private radio down in the basement. I didn't say a damn thing to him."

Shannon looked quizzically at Danny. "What do you mean, private radio in the basement?"

Danny sniffed. "I caught him gold-bricking down in the potato cellar."

Shannon reached out and gripped Danny's hand. "Tell me some more. Was he a noncom?"

"A noncommissioned officer? Corporals and sergeants are noncommissioned officers, aren't they? A lieutenant is a commissioned officer." Danny Higgins suddenly drew back. "Cripes, you're an officer."

"That's right. By the grace of the president and Congress, I'm an officer. A first lieutenant."

"Only a lieutenant? Hell, you were a lieutenant on the force. A homicide lieutenant ought to be a general in the army. At least a captain."

Lieutenant Shannon laughed. "You always were good for a laugh, Danny. Now look, I'm interested in this radio you mentioned. I want you to show it to me."

"Once a cop always a cop," Danny Higgins said disgustedly. "Only you're not a cop any more. So you can't drag me down to headquarters."

"I'm afraid I can, Danny," Lieutenant Shannon said. "And I don't even need a warrant in the army. Come along, Danny."

"I won't," Danny said stubbornly. "I'm quitting the army. I told you—"

"Cut it, Danny!" Lieutenant Shannon snapped. "You can't quit the army. If you run away, it's desertion. In wartime they shoot deserters."

"Huh?"

"And in peace time the minimum sentence is two years in a military prison. This being a national emergency, you'll probably get five years."

A slow expression of horror crept into Danny Higgins' eyes. "You mean I got to stick it out a whole year?"

"Of course. It'll do you good. A year in the army may knock some of those crazy ideas out of your thick skull. You were heading down the wrong street fast, Danny. That mob you ran with—they'll all wind up behind the eight ball. Now, come along with me. I want to see that radio."

Danny Higgins shrugged helplessly and followed Lieutenant Shannon back to the barracks that housed the two hundred and fifty men of Company G.

Danny led the way into the kitchen, where one of the K. P.'s cried out, "Ten-shun!" and everyone, including the cook, clicked heels and stood as stiff as Springfield rifles until Shannon said, "At ease, men."

Going down to the basement, Shannon pressed the electric-light switch. In the corridor he looked inquiringly at Danny.

Danny pulled open the door of the potato storeroom. Then he exclaimed in chagrin, "It's gone, Shannon."

Lieutenant Shannon sent a swift glance about the room, taking in the sacks of potatoes. Then he stooped quickly and examined the floor. Finally he nodded and straightened.

"All right, Danny, he's gone."

"You don't think I saw anyone here?"

"Oh, yes, I believe you, Danny. Now, describe him."

"Huh? He was just a . . . a soldier. I didn't get a look at his face. It was almost dark in here."

"You don't even know then if he was a private or a noncom?"

"Uh-huh, but I can tell you one thing. He had a wallop as hard as that straw boss."

"Sergeant Slattery? Him-m-m, I know Slattery. He's the toughest top sergeant in the regiment. If the man hit you as hard as Slattery did, he must be a giant."

"I'm thinking maybe it was Slattery himself," said Danny sullenly.

"No," Shannon said decisively. "It couldn't have been Slattery. He's been in the army for fourteen years. No one who's been in the army that long and who came up the hard way would be a—would be the second man who hit you."

"Why not?" Danny asked truculently.

Lieutenant Shannon sighed wearily. "Because he wouldn't. Take my word for that, Danny. And look, I want to give you some advice. It'll save you a lot of trouble in this army. Take that chip off your shoulder. A buck private is the lowest form of humanity. You may have been a big shot on the outside, but here in the army you're nothing. Nothing at all. A first-class private who was a garbage man in civilian life ranks you. Remember that, Danny. And another thing—remember to say 'sir' to an officer."

"You mean you, Shannon?"

Shannon smiled. "That's a good place to start."

Danny Higgins sneered. "How the hell'd you get to be an officer and me only a private?"

"Why, Danny, I happen to have held a commission in the reserves. Besides which I put in about four years in the National Guard. I spent one night every week at the armory while you were spending your time in poolrooms. Catch on, Danny?"

"I catch. And you know what? I'm going to be an officer myself! What do I have to be to rank this guy Slattery?"

Shannon measured him. "A second lieutenant."

"O. K., that's what I'll be, then. And it won't take me any fourteen years. I'll do it before my year's up. You watch."

"I will, Danny. And now I've got to go. But look—don't say anything

about this man you saw here with the radio. Promise me that, Danny."

"O. K., Shan—sir!"

2

Cofonel Richard Jordan graduated from West Point in 1917. He became a company commander before going to France and before it ended, a year later, he wore the silver leaves of a lieutenant colonel.

And then, with demobilization, he was reduced to the rank he had acquired upon graduation from the academy. He didn't become a first lieutenant until 1923. Sixteen years later he reached the rank he had possessed temporarily during the World War. When the Selective Service Act came along he became full colonel and commandant of one of the finest army posts in the country—the Presidio of San Francisco. He was only forty-five now. In the normal course of events, he might have been retired in nineteen years as full colonel. Now he was one of the selected officers, and if no misfortune befell him, he might, because of his brilliant record, in time become a corps commander. There are only nine corps commanders in the entire army.

Today he sat in his office at post headquarters and tapped the telegram that an aid had just delivered. He shook his head and called to the orderly who stood just outside the door. When the man came in and clicked his heels at attention, Jordan said:

"Orderly, give my compliments to Captains Herbert, Ash and Willis and tell them that I want to see them at once. On your way out, ask Lieutenant Shannon to come in."

Lieutenant Shannon entered a moment later. The colonel returned his salute and regarded him thoughtfully. He saw a lean man, six feet tall, whose trim figure belied his one hundred and eighty-five pounds. Unconsciously, the colonel nodded approval.

"Lieutenant Shannon," he said, "you were a police detective in civilian life, I believe."

"That's right, sir," replied Lieutenant Shannon. "Homicide."

"I know. I'm familiar with your work through the newspapers. You belonged to the modern school of policemen—but I've heard that you forget that once in a while." The colonel's eyes twinkled. "The Irish in you."

Lieutenant Shannon made no comment to that, but he relaxed visibly.

"Colonel Richardson has told me about you. He considers you the most brilliant acquisition to G-2 in a good many years. That's why I've asked you here. In a few minutes the commanders of Companies A, C and G will arrive, but before they get here I want to tell you what I'm

going to tell them." He looked down at the telegram on his desk. "Have you ever heard of a man named James Marsh?"

"The powder expert?" Shannon asked cautiously.

"Yes. I believe he spent some years with the Achilles Powder Co. Well, he's invented a new type of gunpowder. A powder which—if it comes up to Marsh's claims—makes obsolete the powder of every army in the world. According to Marsh, this powder will increase the velocity and penetrating power of every shell used in warfare, from the .45-caliber revolver cartridge to the 16-inch navy gun. Have you any idea what that would mean, lieutenant?"

"Why," said Shannon slowly, "it will mean that the country possessing it will nullify all the armament of the opposing powers—tanks, armored cars, airplanes, ships . . ."

Colonel Jordan nodded. "That's right—if the powder is as good as Marsh claims. Well, Marsh is coming here. He's going to make his final tests on this reservation. I have orders from Washington to turn over the facilities of the post and—" He paused and looked sharply at the lieutenant from Military Intelligence. "—and if the powder works, it must remain the exclusive property of this country. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. I'll tell Colonel Richardson then that you're on special duty for the duration of Marsh's stay at the post."

"Thank you, sir. Now, there's something I'd like to report. I have reason to believe that there's an unauthorized radio transmission set in this camp."

The colonel blinked. "What makes you think that, lieutenant?"

Quickly Shannon told of his meeting with Danny Higgins and his investigation of the potato cellar in the barracks of Company G. "The man wasn't lying, sir," he finished. "There's a thick layer of dust in that storeroom, and I distinctly made out the mark of wire uncoiled on the floor. There was no reason for wire to be in that cellar."

The colonel frowned. "I don't like that, lieutenant. I don't like it at all. That means you'll have to be doubly cautious."

"I know. I'll probably need assistance. I wonder if I could have this man Higgins assigned to help me."

"From what you told me of him, I wouldn't imagine he'd be of any help. An unsavory character?"

"Oh, not at all. Danny Higgins has some peculiar qualities that may be of invaluable help to me."

"Then get him. Have him assigned to you as an orderly. And requisition anyone else you need."

The orderly came into the office and saluted smartly.

"Sir, Captains Herbert, Ash and Willis wish to pay their respects."

"Have them come in—and then close the door."

The officers entered and Colonel Jordan got up and came around the desk. "Good morning, gentlemen," he said after he had exchanged salutes. "This is Lieutenant Shannon, of G-2. I've just assigned him to special duty, which concerns you gentlemen in a way."

He smiled at the company commanders. "I suppose you captains are proud of having in your companies the men who composed the rifle team that won the matches at Camp Perry? Of course! And it is because of that that we are being honored with the presence at this camp of James Marsh, who, by order of the secretary of war, will arrive here tomorrow to complete his tests with the new powder of which you may have heard rumors. Your rifle team is going to test it. And all of us—Heaven help us!—are at the mercy of this inventive genius as long as he remains here. I have orders to that effect."

Captain Ash, of Company G, let out a groan. "I had an inventor palmed off on me when I was stationed at Yuma, Arizona, colonel. He had a sand shoe for mules so they could travel in desert country. Isn't there a regulation that an officer can be compelled to have only one inventor in a ten-year period?"

Colonel Jordan chuckled, then tried to look stern. "Marsh comes well recommended, and he has a good background. I don't like inventors myself, but there's nothing I can do about this one. I merely brought you here to ask you to relieve your rifle experts of their duties and to ask you to conceal your feelings as much as possible if Marsh should become a little . . . er . . . obstreperous. He has—"

He stopped as knuckles rapped on the door. "Come in!"

The orderly opened the door. "Beg your pardon, sir, but we've just received a phone call from the Lombard gate that Mr. Marsh has arrived—"

"Damn!" exclaimed the colonel. "He wasn't supposed to get here until tomorrow."

"And there's been a little difficulty, sir," the orderly continued. "The gate guard is holding Mr. Marsh for your orders."

Colonel Jordan winced. "Lieutenant Shannon, will you run down there and take charge of Mr. Marsh?" Bring him here—no, it's lunch time. Bring him to my house. We'll all have lunch there. He may be a little upset over this incident."

Outside post headquarters stood an olive-drab car with an eagle on the windshield. Shannon opened the door and stepped in. "Colonel's orders, chauffeur. Drive to the Lombard gates as fast as you can."

The chauffeur touched his cap and shifted into gear. The car leaped forward so suddenly Shannon was slammed back against the cushions.

It was a mile and a half to the gates. The military car made it in

something over a minute. New York taxicab drivers are sissies in comparison with the average army chauffeur—particularly those who sport the post commander's insignia and are immune.

The car was braked as suddenly as it had been started, and Shannon almost tumbled out of it. When he regained his equilibrium he started toward the gate—and stopped.

The most decrepit-looking truck that had ever traveled under its own power blocked the reservation gate. It was loaded high with all sorts of paraphernalia, lathes, pulleys, drill presses, milling machines, as well as a number of boxes and barrels.

That wasn't what had halted Shannon, however. It was the absence of the gate guard and the sight of the beast that stood snarling at the closed door of the gate house.

The creature was probably a dog, but it looked more like a werewolf. It had shepherd blood if the long body and the coarse hair meant anything. But its head looked like a chow dog's. Its tail—it was a tail—might have belonged to a jackass.

"Hello, the guardhouse!" Shannon called.

A soldier stuck his head out of a window next to the door and drew it in again quickly as the dog leaped up.

A voice came from inside:

"We got a guy here claims he's a pal of the colonel's, but we dassent open the door on account of his mutt. I wanna know can we shoot the dog."

"No!" exclaimed Shannon angrily. "Open that door and release Mr. Marsh."

There was a moment's hesitation, then the gatehouse door was opened and an angry, red-faced man in civilian clothes stepped out. "Down, Augie!" he snapped at the dog, then glared at Lieutenant Shannon.

"Are you the commander of these men?"

Lieutenant Shannon winced as he advanced upon the inventor. Marsh was about fifty. He had a three days' growth of beard and had evidently slept in his clothing, coat and trousers of which did not match. He wore no hat, and his unruly black hair was tinged with gray.

Shannon said: "I'm Lieutenant Shannon. Colonel Jordan has asked me to bring you to his house for lunch. I'll drive you over in the staff car and the chauffeur can bring your truck."

"What?" cried Marsh. "Trust my formulas and implements to a stupid soldier?"

Shannon's nostrils flared a little. "Then I'll ride with you in your truck."

"Very well," said Marsh, somewhat mollified. "How far is it?"

"Almost two miles to the colonel's house. About half that far to

headquarters." Shannon signaled to Colonel Jordan's chauffeur that he would ride with Marsh, then climbed into the cab of the truck.

Marsh went around to the driver's seat, allowing the mongrel dog to leap in ahead of him. The animal growled deep in its throat as it sniffed Shannon.

"It's all right," said Marsh gruffly. "He won't bite you—now."

He started the motor of the truck and shifted into gear. The vehicle groaned and shivered and began to move.

"Straight ahead until we reach the parade ground," Shannon directed, "then turn left to Infantry Terrace."

3

After Lieutenant Shannon left Danny Higgins, the former bookie returned to the latrines and hosed down the concrete floor. Finished with that little task, he went up to his squad room on the first floor of the barracks. The room overlooked the parade ground, on which several infantry companies were even now engaged in close-order drill.

The squad room was empty except for himself, and he watched the drilling through the windows. A slow grin crossed his face after a few minutes.

"Maybe I'd just as soon clean toilets as drill," he muttered. "That looks like hard work. I think I'll try for K. P. tomorrow."

He went to his iron cot and threw himself upon it for an hour or so of bunk fatigue before the soldiers were recalled from drill.

He had scarcely closed his eyes when he heard hard heels on the wooden floor and, looking up, saw Sergeant Slattery approaching. Danny groaned and swung his feet to the floor.

"You lay a hand on me again," he said to the sergeant, "and I'll cold-cock you."

"Tut-tut, me lad," chuckled Sergeant Slattery. "I don't hold no hard feelings. How d'you like the army now?"

It was the same question he had asked Danny before the previous hostilities, and Danny almost fell into the same trap. He caught himself, however, and grinned. "Swell. I'm figuring on working for a promotion. I want to be a lieutenant before my hitch is up."

"Ah, a lieutenant it is you want to be? Sure, and then you'd rank me."

"That's the idea."

"Good. But in the meantime, I thought I'd tell you that I was puttin' you on guard duty tonight."

Danny looked uncomfortably at the top sergeant. "That's bad, I suppose?"

"Oh, no"—sarcastically. "You sleep most of the night—except for the

little while you walk post. A mere two hours at a stretch. You got to take guard duty once in a while, and I thought you wouldn't mind it today on account of it's pay day and the soldiers don't like guard on pay day. You bein' a recruit without no pay comin', you shouldn't mind it."

"No," said Danny Higgins bitterly. "I don't mind it at all. What do I guard?"

Sergeant Slattery shrugged. "I dunno. I'm not the commander of the guard. But after chow, you fall out with the other recruits and learn the front end of a rifle from the back so you don't shoot off your toes while you're walking post tonight."

Chuckling, the sergeant walked off. At the door of the squad room he stopped. "You done a grand job with the latrines, recruit. I never saw a toilet cleaned better."

The army believes in being thorough. Learning the fundamentals of the Springfield rifle, under the tutelage of a cobra-tongued corporal, occupied the entire afternoon—until after four o'clock. Then Danny was informed that he had fifteen minutes before guard mount.

During the afternoon, G Company was paid, and when Danny entered the squad room he saw something that filled his heart with gladness—a mammoth crap game going on in the big room.

"Oh, Lord," he breathed softly. "And me on guard!"

A blanket had been spread in the center of the floor, and at least forty soldiers were crowded around it on their knees. Danny Higgins threw his rifle upon his cot and bucked the solid line of soldiers.

Frantically he searched his pockets, only to recall that he had less than two dollars on his person. He hadn't figured it worth while to bring any money with him when he had been inducted into the service.

"They give you everything," he had been told.

And here was the biggest crap game he had ever seen in his life, and he had—he counted it—one dollar and sixty cents.

Using his elbows and knees, he fought his way to the blanket.

"I'll let the eight bucks ride," exclaimed an excited soldier.

Money showered upon the blanket from all sides, and the game-keeper—a self-appointed gamekeeper who dragged down a quarter on every third and fifth pass because of his ingenuity—had to throw back some of the money.

"Shoot," he ordered laconically.

The shooter picked up a pair of green dice and rattled them lustily in his hand. He rolled them out and they stopped at six.

"A dollar he doesn't six," cried Danny.

"Bet," said the soldier at his right elbow.

The man with the dice scooped up the celluloid cubes and promptly rolled out a six.

"I'm dragging down," he cried. "I'm shooting a buck."

"I got sixty cents of it," said Danny.

The gamekeeper called Danny a dirty name. "No chicken feed in this game. Besides, you weren't on him before. Last man has the privilege."

"Sixty cents he doesn't pass," cried Danny, unperturbed. "Sixty cents he's wrong."

A heavy hand tapped Danny's shoulder. "You, recruit, you're only holding up guard mount, that's all."

Reluctantly, Danny got to his feet. The soldier with the rifle waited while Danny got his own piece and then he herded him out to the parade ground across from the barracks.

About twenty men were lined up in a double rank. A corporal called them to attention, then gave the order: "Inspection, arms!" which Danny muffed. He also got the subsequent maneuvers wrong and earned some choice remarks. But finally the detail got to the guardhouse, where the old guard was relieved, and Danny drew Post No. 7 of the third relief.

He learned that this meant he would walk post from nine-thirty to eleven-thirty in the evening, and again from three-thirty to five-thirty in the morning. In between he was supposed to stay in the guardhouse with the other sentries and was not allowed to remove any of his clothing.

Danny went to sleep in the guard room along about nine o'clock. It seemed but a moment before the corporal of the guard was shaking him, and Danny, shivering from the evening chill, got his rifle and went outside.

The corporal got together his relief—eight men—and took them off to relieve the second relief. They marched awkwardly a block down the main, asphalted road, then turned left and went a quarter mile down a narrow street lined with warehouses.

Finally they were challenged by a sentry. The corporal identified himself, then said. "Private Higgins, you're Post No. 7."

Danny stepped out and faced the sentry, bringing his rifle clumsily to "port arms," as he had been instructed.

"This is Post No. 7," recited the sentry being relieved. "It starts at this point and goes back here, behind the warehouses, to the edge of the hospital grounds, then due west to the cavalry stables, then back here. General orders cover."

"Post!" snapped the corporal.

The relieved sentry fell into line, and the relief, marching off, left Danny Higgins alone for his first tour of guard duty.

He looked at the deserted warehouses and the black cavern that was the alley he was supposed to patrol. Its shadows became lurking shapes

that waited with savage anticipation. He shivered. So now he was a night watchman—with probably the loneliest beat, in the world.

He shouldered his rifle and ventured into the dark alley. The gloom was so thick he had to feel his way, but after a while he became accustomed to it and managed reasonably well.

A lone block away he came to a dead-end wall beyond which were the hospital grounds. He turned left, and after a while came to the paved road which intersected his post. He scowled.

It would have been a lot easier—and more cheerful—just to walk up and down the paved road in the middle of Post No. 7 rather than tour the dark alleys. There were lights on the main street.

He continued on to the second alley, however, and brightened as he saw a light halfway down. The light came from a small window about six feet from the ground.

Unabashed, Danny went up to the window and, standing on his toes, peeked in. He saw a middle-aged man in civilian clothes mixing something in a large bowl. There was a scowl on the man's face.

At the man's feet lay a huge dog, and even as Danny caught sight of it the animal leaped up and rushed for the window at which Danny was peering in.

Danny promptly resumed walking his post, leaving the warehouse behind him with considerable alacrity.

When he reached the starting point of Post No. 7 Danny looked at his watch and saw that the circuit had taken him approximately fifteen minutes. That meant that he would have to make eight rounds in his two-hour tour of duty.

The light in the warehouse was out on his second round, but Danny, hearing the dog barking outside, walked quickly past the building.

The third time around the light was on, but the dog was silent. On the fourth circuit the light was still on, and the dog was again silent. Danny, looking at the square of yellow light, stepped on something large and yielding.

An involuntary shudder ran through him and he leaped six feet past the bundle on the ground. He brought his rifle down to the ready and slipped off the safety as he had been instructed only that afternoon.

He could distinctly make out the shadow on the ground. It looked like—a man.

Danny asked hoarsely: "Who's there?"

The figure on the ground made no reply. Danny challenged. "What are you doing down there?"

No reply.

Danny backed off another half a dozen feet and, gripping his rifle with one hand, fished a match out of his pocket. He struck it on the stock of his rifle.

He dropped the match instantly and yelled at the top of his lungs: "Corporal of the guard—Post No. 7! Corporal of the guard—Post No. 7!" Then he began running.

At the end of his post, under a bright arc light, he stopped and began shouting again. "Corporal of the guard—Post No. 7!"

In the distance, accouterments clanked and hard heels clicked upon the pavement. Danny Higgins kept up his yelling until he saw the corporal and a half squad of soldiers coming at double time.

When they came up, he cried: "There's a dead man down here."

The corporal drew up, scowling. "Oh, it's you, Higgins. The top warned me you were a cut-up."

"I tell you there's a dead man down here," Higgins said doggedly. "Down here by the warehouse where the civilian's fooling around with a big dog."

The corporal exclaimed. "Mr. Marsh, the inventor! Cripes!"

He flicked on a large flashlight and began running down the alley. Higgins and the other sentries followed. The light in the window was still on, and, as the group approached, Marsh and his huge dog came out of the warehouse. The inventor carried an electric lantern which, with the aid of the corporal's flashlight, shed sufficient light upon the alley to pick out the huddle on the ground.

"Gawd!" cried the corporal of the guard as he focused his torch upon the body. "It's Haichek, the colonel's dog robber! And he's croaked."

"What's the matter with that man?" snapped James Marsh. "Is he drunk?"

He stopped a dozen feet from the dead man. One hand gripped his electric lantern and the other the collar on his shaggy dog. The beast was growling fiercely.

The corporal was making an examination. "He's dead. He's . . . he's had a bayonet stuck through his back."

He got suddenly to his feet. "Bowers, Young! Stand guard here. Watch Higgins, too. Don't let anyone touch anything. Needham, you come with me."

"Wait a minute, sergeant!" cried Marsh, unknowingly promoting the corporal of the guard. "You can't leave my laboratory unprotected. Not after what's happened. I want an armed man inside with me and another outside. Colonel Jordan has issued orders that I'm to have anything I want."

The corporal apparently didn't know about that, but decided not to take any chances. "Young," he said. "You go inside with Mr. Marsh. Keep your rifle ready. Higgins, I'm relieving you from this post. Come with me. Snappy!"

Lieutenant Shannon was playing billiards in the Officers' Club when the telephone call came. A moment later he was tearing down the stairs and cutting across the parade ground toward the guardhouse.

The sentry on Post No. 1 in front of the guardhouse challenged him, but the sergeant of the guard, on the veranda, came running down the stairs.

"A man's been murdered, sir, on Post No. 7."

"That's what you said over the telephone," Shannon said impatiently. "Where's Post No. 7?"

"Down by the warehouse. I'll show you. I've sent for the officer of the day. I think that's him coming now."

Headlights of a car swerved around the turn in front of the infantry barracks and swooped down upon the guardhouse. The limousine screeched to a stop and Captain Willis of C Company stuck his head out of the car.

"Lieutenant Shannon! Jump in. Sergeant, where is it?"

"Post No. 7, sir. It's—"

Neither Shannon nor Captain Willis heard the rest. The car was roaring away again. A few moments later it stopped a short distance from where the body of Haichek still lay as it had been discovered.

The sentries sprang to attention, but Captain Willis put them at ease. He kept at a distance from the dead man, however.

Shannon approached and dropped to his knees beside the dead man. A quick examination of the body was enough. Then he straightened and borrowed a flashlight from one of the sentries. With it he examined the ground carefully, moving toward the lighted window of the warehouse in which James Marsh had set up his laboratory. As he neared the window, the rear door burst open and the inventor came out.

"Ah, Lieutenant Shannon!" he cried. "It's about time. I want to know what's going on here."

Shannon stiffened as he saw Marsh. Then he quickly shook his head. "I'd like to know what's been going on, Mr. Marsh."

"I don't know a thing," the powder expert declared. "I set up shop here this afternoon and I've been working ever since. I know that I've been spied upon all evening. Augie was restless. He'd bark every fifteen minutes or so."

"Probably at the sentries making their rounds."

Marsh scowled. "I didn't want any sentries here. Augie's enough of a watchman for me. I can defend myself. Who's that—over there?"

"A man named Haichek. I'm afraid he's been killed."

"How?"

"A bayonet. Is . . . er . . . everything all right inside?"

"Eh? Of course. Somebody's been spying on me, but that didn't do them any good. I kept the doors locked on the inside. No one could have got in. Not alive."

"You're armed, Mr. Marsh?"

"Of course I'm armed," snapped Marsh. "And I've been handling guns all my life. Well, get rid of these men so I can get back to my work. I've got to get the cartridges ready for the tests tomorrow."

"You're making them for tomorrow? Even now?"

"Why not? I didn't kill that man. I don't even know him."

Shannon stepped closer so the soldiers about could not hear his words. "He was Colonel Jordan's orderly. I was wondering if he could have overheard anything today?"

"What? I didn't give out my formula, did I? That's my own secret. It's going to stay my secret—until the government accepts, or rejects, my powder."

Shannon nodded. "Very well, sir, but in view of what's happened I wonder if you wouldn't be safer—I mean, more comfortable at the Officers' Club. This warehouse is pretty far off from the center of things."

"It suits me. As I said, no one's going to break in on me. Not as long as Augie's alive—and I can lift a gun. You might repeat that out loud. A warning. Good night, sir!" And with that the inventor slammed into the warehouse. A moment later the door was opened and the sentry who had gone in with him a while ago stepped out. Shannon heard a latch being slammed home on the door.

He turned away; then, exclaiming softly, dropped to the ground and examined it closely with his flashlight. Finally he got up and approached Captain Willis.

"Sir, as officer of the day I want you to detail two men here—one of them a noncom to watch this little patch of ground under the window. I don't want anyone to obliterate the footprints on the ground. Absolutely no one—not even Mr. Marsh inside."

"Very well, lieutenant. Corporal!"

Danny Higgins had been relieved of his rifle and side arms and was sitting in the little room of the commander of the guard when Lieutenant Shannon came in. The latter made a quick signal to Danny, then said, briskly: "Is this the sentry, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant, who was acting commander of the guard. "I thought it best to relieve him and post a supernumerary in his place."

Shannon nodded. "I'd like to question him—privately, sergeant."

The sergeant saluted and stepped out of the room. Shannon waited until the door was firmly closed, then turned to Danny Higgins.

"All right, Danny, let's have it."

"You got it, Shan—Lieutenant Shannon. I was walking post and all of a sudden I stepped on this fellow. I yelled for the corporal of the guard and when he came he said I was under arrest. What the hell for? For finding a stiff?"

"You're not under arrest—yet. And you haven't told a thing. I want every detail of your guard tour. Everything you saw or did. Begin at the beginning and don't miss a thing."

"I don't know anything. You saw the damn post they put me on—the back side of the world. I didn't see a damn thing and didn't hear anything—until I stepped on this guy."

"He was lying right in the middle of the alley, Danny. That wasn't your first time around, was it?"

"Uh-huh. I went around half a dozen times."

"You mean that literally—six times?"

Danny scowled. "No. Let's see. I timed it. Took me fifteen minutes each time around. Yeah, it was the fourth trip. The first three times I didn't see anything."

"Absolutely nothing?"

Danny fidgeted. "Nothing except the guy and his mutt."

"Ah! When did you see him?"

"Well, the first time around. You see, it was as black as the inside of an eight ball in that alley until I saw the light in his window. Naturally, I took a quick peek inside. That's when I saw him and the mutt. What the hell's a civilian doing out there anyway?"

"That's another story, Danny. Take my word for it, however, that Marsh has a right in that building. All right, you peeked through the window and saw him. What was he doing?"

"Mixing something in a bowl. Maybe a rabbit stew."

"What was he doing the second time you looked in?"

Danny sneered. "Copper tricks, huh? I didn't look in the second time. The window was dark."

"He'd gone to bed?"

"No, because the light was on again the next time."

"It was out on your second trip and on the third? What about the last time?"

"Still on."

Lieutenant Shannon frowned. "You're sure of that? The light was on the first, third and fourth times—but you didn't find the body until the last trip."

"That's right."

"Couldn't you have missed it on the first trips? It's pretty dark in that alley."

Danny rubbed his chin. "It's dark, all right, but you remember the

body was lying crosswise in the alley. I'd have had to detour around it—and I wasn't detouring around anything in those alleys. I was going straight down the middle. I know *that*!"

"Then the body couldn't have been there until the last trip. That narrows down the time to between ten-fifteen and ten-thirty. Danny, I'm glad to say that you're in the clear on this."

"That's decent of you, lieutenant," said Danny sarcastically, "but how do you know?"

"Your bayonet. I examined it before I came in here. It hasn't any bloodstains on it."

"That's just dandy. So if you don't mind, I'll go back and finish my little stretch of guard duty so I can grab some shut-eye."

"You won't have to go back, Danny. The commander of the guard has put the supernumerary on your post. I imagine he'll let you go back to your barracks."

Danny's eyes lighted up for an instant, then clouded. "I'd just as soon hang around here."

The lieutenant pursed up his lips. "Look, Danny, I want you to do something for me. Taps has sounded and the men are supposed to be in their beds, but . . . ah . . . well, this is pay day, and I imagine all is not what it seems. So—I'd like for you to talk to the men. Look them over and talk. Hm-m-m—a little detective work."

"For you, Shannon? I thought you were just a looey in the army—not a copper?"

"In a way, I'm both, Danny. You see, I'm in the Intelligence Department. You might call it the equivalent of the police department."

"I thought so," said Danny disgustedly. "And you want me to be a stool pigeon."

"No, I want you to be my assistant. Not only tonight, but tomorrow—and perhaps for some time afterward."

Danny brightened. "Swell, Shannon. Then, how about lending me a couple of bucks?"

"What for? You can't spend money tonight."

Danny put his tongue in his cheek. "You can't tell."

Shannon grinned, then pulled two dollar bills from his pocket. Danny grabbed them and headed for the door. "I can go now?"

"Yes, I'll fix it with the sergeant. Better get your rifle and side arms."

Three minutes later Danny pounded up the stairs of the darkened barracks that housed G Company. He tried to push open the front door but found it locked.

"Who is it?" a guarded voice inside asked.

"Higgins—Private Higgins. I live here."

The door was pulled opened and Danny slipped in. The moment

the door was closed behind him a light went on. Danny shot a quick glance about the squad room and saw that every window in it was completely covered with a blanket. In the center of the floor, underneath a single electric bulb, the crap game was still going on. The number of players, however, had dwindled to a mere twenty or so.

Danny sprang forward gleefully. "Oh, boy; oh boy!"

Sergeant Slattery, on hands and knees, looked up at Danny. "Sufferin' cats!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were on guard!"

"I was, but the supernumerary took my place. D'ya mind, sarge?"

"Not any more," Slattery said disgustedly. "I'm beginning to think I underestimated you. Whose dice?"

"Yours, sarge," said the gamekeeper.

The first sergeant dropped a half dollar on the blanket. "Four bits, I shoot."

A player threw down a coin. "Never saw a man so careful of his money. If I made eighty-four bucks a month—"

"If you paid alimony to two women you'd shoot pennies," the sergeant retorted. "Here I go. Crap, dammit!"

"Always double after a crap," Higgins advised.

"Who asked you? I was shooting craps before you were born. Four bits more."

It was covered, and the sergeant promptly threw boxcars. He swore luridly. But this time he doubled his bet. The result was a third crap. His swearing brought a word of caution from the guard at the door. "Not so loud, sergeant!"

"You can't throw more than three craps in a row," Danny said. "Nobody can. Pile it on this time."

The sergeant reached into his breeches pocket and brought out a roll that would have choked a sixteen-inch coast artillery gun. Whistles went up around the blanket. "You been holdin' out on your alimony!"

The sergeant peeled off a five-dollar bill, hesitated, then added another. "Nobody can throw more than three craps," he repeated Danny's advice.

He threw Little Joe, and with his next roll sevened out.

"You squirt," he gritted at Danny Higgins, "I got a good notion . . ."

"Here's your chance," Danny said impudently. "They're my dice and I shoot two bucks."

"I got it," said the sergeant.

Danny clicked the dice and rolled them out a good four feet. They stopped six-one. "I shoot it!"

"I got it all," snapped Sergeant Slattery.

Danny threw another seven. "And I shoot the eight."

"I'm on him," snarled Slattery.

Danny cackled the dice furiously in his cupped hand, then rolled them so they stopped inches from Slattery's hands. The result was the same as before—a seven.

Slattery scooped up the dice and examined them closely. Then he handed them to the gamekeeper. "How about it, Yoskin?"

Yoskin handed them back promptly. "G. K., my initials are on them."

"All of it," exclaimed Danny Higgins. "Sixteen bucks. How about it, sergeant? You still game?"

"You're damn right I am. But roll them out this time."

"All the way across the blanket—for you, sergeant. How about an eleven this time?"

The dice came up eleven.

Slattery howled and again scooped up the dice and passed them to Yoskin for examination. The latter dropped them and shook his head sadly.

"I've got it," Slattery said desperately.

"Uh-huh," Danny said cheerfully. "Four passes is more than I usually let it ride. Three's my rule. I made an exception just for you. I'm dragging down thirty-one bucks. Shooting a single."

Sergeant Slattery called Danny some bad names but faded the dollar. Danny put his tongue in his cheek, rattled the dice and threw snake eyes!

"For a lousy buck he craps!" yelled the sergeant. "Blank damn the luck, anyway!"

"You won, didn't you?" Danny asked innocently. "There's no pleasing you at all, is there? I'll tell you what. You call it. Tell how much of this you want to fade and I'll shoot it—up to thirty-one sixty."

Perspiration was standing out on Sergeant Slattery's face. "You mean you got into this game with two dollars and sixty cents?"

"Uh-huh. Any rule against that?"

"No, you such and which. All right, I'll fade ever damn cent you've got—thirty-one sixty."

"Count it out."

The sergeant did, but as Danny reached for the dice he lunged forward. "Wait a minute; I was a sucker to let it go this far. Yoskin, go dig up that leather cup you use in your big game."

"Oh, you think I'm stackin' the dice, sergeant?" Danny asked innocently. "I'm a recruit. Where would I have learned that?"

"I looked up your service record today. It says you're a bookbinder by vocation. That wouldn't happen to be a bookmaker, would it?"

Danny smirked. "Bring on the dice cup, Yoskin, so I can take the sergeant's money and hit the hay."

Ten minutes later the sergeant climbed wearily to his feet. "All right,

recruit, you got my money. But tomorrow's another day. Have a good sleep now—I hope not!"

"Whoosh!" said Yoskin, after the top sergeant had left the room. "The sarge certainly hates to lose money."

"He had it coming to him," said Danny Higgins. "He popped me one today."

"Yeah," said one of the other soldiers. "I heard about that. And who was that looey you brung back to the barracks with you?"

"That wasn't a looey," Danny said, "that was my assistant. From the outside."

"And he's a looey now?"

Danny shrugged. "I used to give him hell outside, and now he's boss over me. That's the army, men. Anybody shooting anything?"

5

Again Danny Higgins burrowed his head deeper into the blanket when he heard reveille. But only for a moment. Recollection seeped into his brain and he threw back the blankets and jumped out of bed. Shivering in the morning chill, he dressed hastily and was outside when the corporals reported their squads all present or accounted for.

In the mess hall, twenty minutes later, everyone knew about the thing that had happened during the night, and Higgins was the center of attention at his table. In a way, he enjoyed it, recounting the finding of the body of Haichek with considerable relish.

"He was a spy, the lousy so-and-so," one soldier commented.

"Yeah, but if he was a spy, who bumped him?" another man asked.

"Another spy, maybe. They always work in pairs."

"What the hell they spyin' around here? All the secret stuff about this camp they could get out of the newspapers."

First Sergeant Slattery, at the noncom's table, caught Danny Higgins' eye and scowled. Danny winced. This was the day after the night before—and the time of reckoning. He couldn't be on K. P. today, because the K. P.'s were assigned the day before, and he would have had to be up before reveille. And he couldn't be latrine orderly again. What dirty job, then, could the sergeant dig up for him?

He finished his breakfast and returned to the squad room, where other soldiers were making up their bunks and cleaning rifles.

Soon drill call sounded across the parade ground, and the soldiers straggled out for the formation. Danny went along and again wondered if he wouldn't rather get a work detail than continue with the fundamentals of the manual of arms of which he had received a smattering the afternoon before.

The corporals reported their men present to the first sergeant and, just as they finished, one of the company's lieutenants came onto the parade ground. Sergeant Slattery reported the company to the lieutenant, and then, facing the company again, snapped:

"Recruits, fall out!"

Danny Higgins swore under his breath. This was it. A dozen men joined him, and Sergeant Slattery took them all in tow and marched them away from the company.

He halted them at the far end of the parade ground. "And now, me lads, I'm going to give you a little instruction in the manual of arms. By rights, a corporal should be doin' this, but I don't hold with these new corporals. They're too easy. You learn my way and you learn for keeps. You, Higgins, step forward!"

Higgins obeyed, and the sergeant, catching hold of him, swung him around so that he faced the other recruits. "Now," he went on, "I'll use Private Higgins for a dummy and show you how you should look. All right, Higgins. 'Ten-shun!'"

Higgins snapped his heels together and stiffened. Sergeant Slattery smiled fondly at the recruits. "Y'see, now, this man thinks he's standin' at attention, and he's doin' it all wrong. Here—throw back your shoulders." He illustrated by slamming Danny Higgins' chest. "And suck in your belly"—a slap in the stomach. "And don't stick out your fanny like that!" Whack!

He circled Private Higgins and tugged and knocked him about. He had a heavy hand, and he was not sparing with it. Higgins fumed. Danny took it for a while, but finally began muttering. Sergeant Slattery whirled on him.

"Did ye say somethin', Private Higgins? Did I hear you mutterin'? Speak up!"

"I said, hit me again and I'll cold-cock you!" Danny gritted between clenched teeth.

Slattery's eyes began to glow. "Talkin' back to a superior, Private Higgins? Well, well, it seems I've got to give you a lesson or two in military etiquette. Stand at attention when I talk to you. Throw back your shoulders!"

"Sergeant Slattery!" called Lieutenant Shannon, approaching across the parade ground.

The sergeant cried, "'Ten-shun!' to the recruits, and promptly saluted Lieutenant Shannon.

"I want to speak to Private Higgins a moment," Lieutenant Shannon said. "Come over here, Higgins."

Tight-lipped, Danny Higgins followed Shannon until they were out of earshot of Slattery and his recruits. Then Shannon halted Danny.

"Danny, I need your help. The murder of that man Haichek is pre-

senting complications. I've spent all night checking on him, and the more I learn about him the less I like what I've learned."

"The fellas are saying he was a spy," Danny volunteered.

"Latrine rumors, but—this is one time the rumors may have some truth. Haichek enlisted in the army less than six months ago and immediately began trying to get into headquarters. He bootlicked until he was made an orderly—and he had more money than an enlisted man could save on his pay."

"Speaking of money, lieutenant," said Danny, "here's the two bucks I borrowed from you last night." He pulled a huge handful of bills from his pocket and peeled off a couple of ones.

The lieutenant looked sharply at the money in Danny's hand. "Where'd you get all that? Last night you were—"

"Why," said Danny, closing one eye, "gambling's against army rules, isn't it?"

"You won all that money last night, after taps?"

"Hm-m-m. I'm just a recruit, lieutenant. Some of these soldiers were shooting craps before I was born. That's what a certain top sergeant said to me—"

"I don't want to hear about it," Shannon said hastily. "But I think it's a dirty trick, Danny. First thing I know, you'll be making book out here."

"It's an idea. I'll think it over."

"No, you won't. I'm going to remove you from temptation. Danny, you're going to the guardhouse."

"What for?"

"Because of Haichek. No—wait a minute. Not for any fault of your own. Remember last night I said I wanted you as an assistant? Well, that's it. I've learned that a man named Monett—from your own company—was caught drunk in formation yesterday and was thrown in the guardhouse. It so happens that Monett enlisted with Haichek, and they've been cronies ever since. I want you to get into the guardhouse and make friends with Monett."

Danny chewed at his lower lip and scowled. "Couldn't you get Monett out of the guardhouse and let me make friends with him out here? I don't like that guardhouse stuff."

Shannon shook his head. "No, it's got to look good. Monett, having been arrested only yesterday, knows that you've been in dutch with your first sergeant ever since you came here. He won't suspect anything if you're jugged, and, being the only other man in the guardhouse from Company G, you'll seem like a friend from home. You won't have to stay in more than two or three days, Danny."

Danny's eyes went past the lieutenant's. "Didn't you say yesterday that a noncom couldn't strike a private in ranks?"

"I did, but—what're you getting at, Danny?"

"I've got to get into the guardhouse, don't I? O. K., I may as well get some fun out of it, huh? See you later, lieutenant."

He started off, then remembered to salute. Shannon walked hurriedly back to the road. But on the other side, he stopped behind a tree and peered back at the parade ground.

Private Danny Higgins walked deliberately back to Sergeant Slattery and the other recruits.

"O. K., pal," he said flippantly. "Where were we?"

Slattery winked wickedly at Danny. "So he didn't take you along to the guardhouse? I thought after last night they'd be puttin' shacks on you by now. Well, well, so we're goin' to have the pleasure of your company a while longer. That's just fine. I need me a good dummy to show these other recruits. Private Higgins, 'ten-shun!"

Danny dropped his rifle to the ground. He picked it up lazily and shifted it from his right to his left hand.

Sergeant Slattery hopped in front of him. "You lunkhead, do you call that standin' at attention? Pull in your guts!"

"Go to hell, sarge!" said Danny.

Sergeant Slattery's eyes almost popped out of his head. "What was that, you blitherin'—"

Danny lifted one from his knees and hit the sergeant on the jaw. The big man reeled back, gasping. He recovered and lunged forward, but Danny shook a finger at him. "Sergeants dassent hit privates," he chided.

Sergeant Slattery's face turned green with suppressed rage. "You—" he said. "You're under arrest! You'll get ninety days in the clink for this."

"I can do with a good long rest," Danny sighed.

"You think you'll rest in the mill, do you?" Slattery said savagely. "You will like hell! Give me your side arms and off you go."

Danny Higgins had become familiar with the guardhouse the evening before. But he had not been in the back section. This was shut off from the guard's room by a door of strap steel. Inside was a large cage, made of the same strap steel. Double-deck bunks lined the cage, and all around ran a narrow corridor, patrolled by a sentry armed with a club. The prisoners were supposed to remain inside the steel cage, although before taps the door was not kept locked—the outer door and the sentry being sufficient protection.

Only two or three prisoners were in the steel cage when Danny was ushered in. These prisoners were "sick." That is, they had pleaded illness that morning and been given a C.C. pill. It would be a long time before they would be sick again.

It was almost eleven-thirty when the formalities were over and, in a

few minutes, the prisoners began coming in by twos and threes. They already knew of Danny's offense and greeted him heartily.

At twelve o'clock the outer door of the cell room was thrown open and the prisoners poured out of the guardhouse to line up in a double rank. A dozen sentries surrounded them and they were marched to the prison mess hall several hundred feet from the guardhouse.

The food was better than that served in G company. The presence of a few sentries did not seem to hurt the appetites of any of the prisoners. They made gaudy comments on the pork and beans and roared at their own wit. It was the first time Danny had eaten pie from a cup and with a spoon. They were a more jovial lot of soldiers than Danny had encountered so far. Even ten or twelve of them who wore "shacks" about their ankles—prisoners already convicted of serious offenses and awaiting shipment to the military prison.

As they poured out of the mess hall to return to the guardhouse, a lean, dark-haired prisoner fell in beside Danny Higgins.

"I'm from G Company," he said. "You and me are the only representatives of that noble company. So you popped Slattery, huh?"

"Yesterday he bopped me," Danny replied.

Monett nodded. "I heard about it. He's been riding you pretty hard. I've only been in since yesterday, myself, but I learn quick. Stick with me and I'll show you the ropes."

"Yeah, but what's this about work? Suppose I don't feel like it?"

Monett frowned. "Hm-m-m, you feel like that? Better get over it. They can't make you do anything in the army, but they can sure as hell make you wish you had done it."

"If you ask me," said Danny darkly, "I'm just about ready to quit this army. I've got connections on the outside."

"What kind of connections?"

"People. The right people. Politicians."

Monett sniffed. "Then what the hell are you doing in the army?"

Danny winked at Monett. "I used to be a bookie on the outside. The pari-mutuels cut into the racket, but I know a couple of other things—and army boys like to gamble."

"What're you talking about?" Monett asked sharply.

Danny stuck his hand into a pocket of his dungarees and pulled it out just far enough to reveal a thick stack of bills. "This! I won most of it from the top sergeant last night—that's why he started riding me this morning."

"But didn't they search you?" Monett exclaimed. "Prisoners aren't supposed to have money."

"Or tobacco," Danny said, "but I'll bet you've got some on you right now. I said I knew a couple of things. I'll show you sometime with a pack of cards. Or a pair of dice."

Monett's nostrils flared. "Stick around, buddy. Maybe we can get together—I figure on owning the guardhouse, myself, in a few days. . . ."

That was the last chance Danny had to talk to Monett until fatigue call at one o'clock. He filed out of the guardhouse, then, with the other prisoners. Monett caught his arm and jerked him into line directly beside him.

The gray-haired prison sergeant came along with his work sheet.

"Coal wagon, No. 1," he read off, "Baker, Zylinski and Haggerty. Coal wagon, No. 2, Swanson, Egbert and Jones. Garbage wagon, No. 1, Monett, Billings and you, new man—Higgins—"

Monett nudged Danny and stepped forward two paces. Another prisoner fell out of ranks and moved over. A sentry snapped. "Forward, march!"

Danny Higgins groaned: "Garbage wagon! Damn you, Monett—"

"Nuts," whispered Monett. "It isn't as bad as it sounds. We work Infantry Terrace and they use small cans up there—"

"No talking," said the sentry.

Danny shot a quick glance over his shoulder. The sentry was a dozen feet behind them, his rifle cradled in his left arm, right hand gripping the small of the stock, his finger convenient to the trigger.

He shuddered, then whispered out of the side of his mouth, "Is that guy's rifle really loaded?"

"Cripes, yes!" replied Monett. "A sentry has to serve a prisoner's time if the prisoner escapes—"

"And cut out the whispering," cried the sentry.

"A John!" Billings grunted.

6

After seeing Danny Higgins placed under arrest by the first sergeant of Company G, Lieutenant Shannon returned to headquarters.

James Marsh, the inventor, was just going into the colonel's private office. "Oh," he said, "the detective lieutenant."

"Intelligence," Shannon corrected.

Marsh bared his teeth. "You might as well come in. This is about you—Colonel Jordan, I came here to make a complaint about this officer."

Colonel Jordan sent a look of concern at Lieutenant Shannon. "I don't understand, Mr. Marsh. I have a report of what happened last night, but I can't see where Lieutenant Shannon could have done anything to offend you."

"I told him I didn't want any sentries spying on me," Marsh snapped. "I worked all night getting things ready and all night these men were stamping around outside and spying on me. And this morning"—his

face twisted angrily—"this morning one of them practically stuck me in the stomach with a bayonet."

Colonel Jordan blinked. "Why would he do that?"

"Because I wanted to look at some footprints or something that he seemed to be roosting over. The man was positively insulting. The best I could get out of him was that he was acting upon Lieutenant Shannon's orders."

"That's right," said Shannon. "I couldn't very well make a good cast with only a flashlight, so I had the men guard the footprints until this morning—"

"Boshi!" sneered Marsh. "There are five thousand soldiers in this camp. All wear the same kind of shoes. It's like telling one bean from a bushel of beans."

"Nevertheless," Shannon said, stiffly, "I can do it."

"Lieutenant Shannon had considerable police experience before he came into the army," Colonel Jordan explained.

"Then why doesn't he find out who killed that man last night?"

"I intend to find that out," Shannon said. "If you'll excuse me now . . ."

Seething, he saluted the colonel and left the office. In front of headquarters he paused a moment, then nodding, walked over to the Officers' Club. He found a major from the medical corps knocking billiard balls about.

"Good morning, Major Fox," he greeted him. "You're a married man, I believe."

"Why, yes," replied the medical corps officer.

"That's fine. I wonder if you'd do me a favor. Telephone your wife to loan me her perfume atomizer?"

Major Fox's eyes goggled. "What the devil! Are you joking?"

"No, I'm serious. I need an atomizer and I don't know where else I could get one on the post. I haven't time to send out to the city for one."

The medical officer grinned. "Why don't you just pour the stuff on you?"

Shannon laughed. "I'm not going to use it to perfume myself. I thought you knew that I was in Intelligence. I need an atomizer for an experiment."

Major Fox became serious. "Oh, of course." He strode to a wall telephone and called the number of his residence. Before his wife replied, he covered the mouthpiece: "You'll send an orderly for it?"

Shannon nodded, then went to the door and called the orderly who was loafing outside. "Orderly, I have a couple of errands I want you to run. First of all, get me a pound of salt and then go to the Quartermaster Corps and get five pounds of plaster of Paris and a small quan-

tity of shellac. Tell them it's for Lieutenant Shannon, by order of Colonel Jordan. When you get those items—they may have to send to a town drugstore for the plaster of Paris—go as quickly as you can to Major Fox's residence and bring the package Mrs. Fox gives you to the warehouse on Post No. 7. I'll be waiting there for you. Now, hurry!"

Shannon returned to the billiard room to thank the medical corps man, then hurried from the club and walked swiftly to the warehouse on Post No. 7.

The two sentries who were still on guard there seemed relieved to see him. "We had a little trouble with this Marsh lad," one of them said. "He was going to sic his dog on us, until I told him I'd shoot the mutt if he did. Then he said he was going to snitch on us to the colonel. We didn't do anything but carry out your orders."

"I know. Mr. Marsh is an inventor. Like most men of genius, he is somewhat irascible—and eccentric." Shannon concluded by clucking his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

Cautiously, he approached the window of the warehouse. The macadam of the alley reached to within three feet of the window and, of course, retained no footprints. But in the three-foot strip were several footprints. All but three were blurred, but the ones that interested Shannon were perfectly formed. The soil was a sandy clay and the prints were as fresh as when made—and traced with blood.

He got down on hands and knees and studied them. One of the prints was larger than the other two and had apparently been made by a different foot. Shannon wondered which belonged to Danny Higgins.

He was still down on his hands and knees when the orderly from the Officer's Club was challenged by the sentries. Shannon got up quickly and took the parcels the man handed to him.

He sent off one of the sentries for a pan and some water. While the man was gone, he emptied the atomizer of its contents and filled it with the shellac.

Approaching the three footprints once more, he sprayed each in turn with the shellac. This hardened almost immediately and formed a thin crust that did not affect the footprints in the least.

When the sentry returned with a pan of water, Shannon looked carefully at the prints, muttering to himself. "About three cups'll fill them." He then opened his sack containing the plaster of Paris and poured enough of it into the pan so that the water was completely covered.

He stirred the mixture vigorously and concluded by thumping the spoon on the side of the pan, this to remove the last few bubbles of air from the creamy substance.

Satisfied with the mixture, Shannon poured it into the footprints, breaking the fall of the plaster of Paris with the spoon so that the contact of the prints was not broken by the impact.

The entire operation took less than ten minutes. When the footprints were all filled, Shannon muttered to himself. "I never thought I'd have to use this stuff in the army."

He turned to the sentries. "All right, you can leave now—"

At that instant a bullet tore into the wall of the warehouse, missing Shannon's head by less than six inches. He threw himself flat upon the ground and another bullet zipped over his head and smacked into the wall.

He jerked around, came up to his knees and lunged for the door of Marsh's laboratory. It was locked.

A puff of wind fanned Shannon's cheek as a third bullet missed him by less than an inch. Shannon waited for no more, then. He plunged for the narrow area between Marsh's warehouse and the building adjoining.

From that vantage point he called to the sentries. "Where's the shooting from?"

"Damned if I know," one of the men called. "I'm lookin' to get a shot at him, but I can't see him."

"Then get out of sight. He seems to have been aiming at me, but he may start on you fellows in a minute."

Prisoners Monett, Billings and Higgins rode up the steep hill to Infantry Terrace, on the back end of the garbage cart, drawn by a patient mule. They were really hitching on to the cart. They were supposed to walk behind it, but since the hill was steep and the sun was hot, they grabbed the tailboard of the cart and swung their feet underneath and braced them on the axle.

Twenty feet behind them plodded the perspiring sentry, dressed in heavy O. D.'s and carrying his rifle.

"Who's got it easier?" chuckled Monett. "Us or the sentry?"

"Damned if I don't think we have," exclaimed Danny. "But I dunno about this garbage."

"It's not so bad," Prisoner Billings offered. "And we can have some fun by annoying the John. Well, here's our first stop."

Infantry Terrace is built like a huge horseshoe. In the exact center is the colonel's house—a big, impressive brick building. On each side of it, falling away down the terrace, are other officers' houses. They become smaller the farther away you get from the colonel's house in the center, until you get down near the ends, where the married second lieutenants reside. These houses are bungalows.

So it was at the lieutenants' houses the garbage detail began its work. Straight down from this side were the infantry barracks, a row of massive buildings, each housing two full companies of infantry.

From the first lieutenant's house to the nearest infantry barracks,

that occupied by the Headquarters Company and the band, was about a half mile. It was another half mile or better, to Colonel Jordan's residence in the center of the horseshoe, up on the terrace.

The prisoners stopped the cart behind the first house and the sentry halted about twenty feet away. Billings then climbed up on the cart itself and Prisoners Higgins and Monett went to the back of the house for the cans.

Instantly, the sentry became nervous. "Hey, wait a minute!" he cried. "I can't watch all of you at once."

Monett and Higgins stopped. "You want us all three to go in for one little can?" Monett asked.

"Yes," he snapped. "We'll all go in—and out!"

Billings climbed down from the cart and joined the others. The three of them marched to the back door of the second lieutenant's house. Monett knocked on the door. A harassed-looking young woman opened it.

"We've come for the garbage, ma'am," Billings said courteously. "Our sentry won't let us come in for it, so you'll have to hand it out."

"What is this, something new?" exclaimed the lieutenant's wife. "I'm busy with the baby. If you can't come in and get it, perhaps my husband, Lieutenant. . . ."

As if by a command, the three prisoners turned and smiled at the sentry. The latter, red-faced, snapped: "Go in and get it!"

Higgins went into the kitchen and picked up a small container. He came out with it and Billings, chuckling, caught hold of the handle, along with Higgins. Monett immediately fell into the spirit of the thing.

The sentry followed them to the cart, coming closer than he ever had before. "Lay off, fellows. Gimme a break. I don't like doing this."

"Give up, John?" Monett asked.

The sentry bobbed his head up and down.

"All right," Billings said, then. "None of us is going to make a break. For all you know, you might be doing this tomorrow. You never can tell in the army."

They proceeded to the second house, where one man went in for the garbage and the others waited. At the next, it was Monett's turn to go in.

He brought out the container, approached the cart and raised it over his head to dump the stuff. Higgins, only two feet away, heard the bullet smack into Monett and caught him as he was whirled around.

The garbage can clattered to the alley, punctuating the crack of the rifle which came to their ears.

Higgins lowered Monett to the ground. Blood was gushing from a hole in the man's chest. A trickle of it started at his mouth, became a bubble and burst. Monett went limp.

"Where'd that come from?" wailed the sentry.

"Gawd!" said Billings, "he's been killed!"

7

Lieutenant Shannon's first act, upon venturing forth from the shelter of the warehouse after the hidden rifleman's attempt to assassinate him, was to examine the bullet holes in the wall. He found them without difficulty and an exclamation of astonishment burst from his lips.

The building was of solid brick—but the bullets had gone clear through the brick!

And then another surprising fact struck him. During the entire commotion, James Marsh's dog, supposedly inside the warehouse, had not let out a sound.

Shannon called to one of the sentries. "Did Marsh take his dog with him when he left here this morning?"

The sentry shook his head. "No, sir! He was growling and snarling inside."

Shannon went to the window, taking care not to step on the footprints he had just carefully filled with plaster of Paris. He peered into the dimly lighted room and then moved away quickly. "Is there another door to this place?"

"Oh, yes," replied one of the men. "In front. This is only the rear door."

Shannon uttered an exclamation of disgust and ran around the building. The front door was closed—but not locked. He shoved it open and stepped inside.

The first thing he saw was the big dog, Augie, lying on the floor in a pool of blood. A bayonet had skewered him to the floor.

Shannon stepped out of the room again and closed the door. He walked swiftly around to the rear and summoned one of the sentries. "Go around to the front door and watch it. Don't let anyone inside. You"—nodding to the second man—"remain on your post here."

He returned to the plaster casts and tested them cautiously. The quick-drying stuff was already hard and he lifted the casts out of their molds. Putting them carefully under his arm, he left the alley behind the warehouse and walked to the guardhouse. Captain Ash, the officer of the day, happened to be in at the moment and looked inquiringly at the plaster casts.

"Got something, lieutenant?"

"Perhaps. How long have you been in here, captain?"

"Oh, about twenty minutes. Why?"

"Did you hear any rifle shots during that time?"

Captain Ash exclaimed, "I did, but then the small-bore target range

isn't very far from here."

"I know, but these shots didn't come from there. Do you mind if I speak to the sentry on Post No. 1?"

"Of course not. Go right ahead."

Shannon stepped out of the guardhouse and signaled to the sentry whose post was in front of the building. The soldier promptly presented arms and, when Shannon had returned the salute, came to port arms.

"Sentry," Shannon said, "did you hear any rifle shots during the last twenty minutes?"

"Yes, sir," the man replied, "but I don't know where they came from. It's hard to tell the direction of a sound out here in the open."

"I know, but think hard a moment. Could the shots have come from across the parade ground here—say, from one of the barracks over there?"

The sentry's eyes widened in astonishment. "Gosh, yes! I mean, yes, sir! In fact, I was wondering if I should report it, but it didn't seem out of the way at the time—"

"What?"

"The man on the roof of G Company. I . . . I thought it was a repairman . . ."

"Did he carry a rifle?" Shannon snapped.

"I didn't see it, sir, but . . ." The man's eyes went around to the big brick barracks. Shannon's followed. The buildings were of two-and-a-half-story design, with sloping peaked roofs. A man could very easily have supported himself on one of the L's and all of his body but head and shoulders would have been concealed.

"Thank you," Shannon said and turned back to the guardhouse.

Captain Ash stood in the doorway. "My company again?"

"I'm afraid so, sir. Someone took a couple of shots at me, a few minutes ago. An awfully good shot . . ."

"There are twelve expert riflemen in my company, including two who were on the rifle team that won the national championship at Camp Perry, Ohio."

"What are their names?"

"Spencer and Dunnigan. Spencer is a corporal and was captain of the team."

"Do you recall the names of the other members of the team?"

"Yes. Private Fenwick of A Company and Privates Sullivan and Lacy of C Company."

"Thank you, sir. And now I wonder if I could use the telephone?"

"Of course."

Shannon entered the guardhouse and put in a call to post headquarters. Before the operator could connect him with Colonel Jordan,

he exclaimed: "Lieutenant Shannon? I've an urgent message for you from Colonel Richardson. He wants you to come to headquarters immediately."

"All right. Never mind the call to Colonel Jordan, then."

Shannon left the guardhouse and walked as swiftly as he could to post headquarters, making his way directly to Colonel Richardson's office. The chief of the intelligence department exclaimed when he entered:

"Lieutenant, I know you're on special duty, but this concerns that duty, I believe. We've just had a message from the department of commerce that a radio transmission set is being operated in this vicinity on an illegal wave length—and the messages picked up are in an extremely difficult code."

"Have they deciphered the code yet?" Shannon asked quickly.

"No, and they're afraid it may take them from twenty-four to forty-eight hours. They want us, however, to find the radio set at once. Because of—well, because of the special duty job to which you're assigned, Marsh. The war department's very much interested in Marsh."

"So am I, Colonel. Things have been happening. You heard of the murder of Colonel Jordan's orderly last night?"

"Yes, but I don't understand for the life of me what he was doing down by those warehouses."

"That's something I'm going to find out. Have I your permission to ask the signal corps for a radio direction finder?"

"I've already asked them, lieutenant. A man is outside with the instrument. You can use him or just the instrument if you're familiar with it."

"I'm familiar with it, all right, but you've got to keep the thing tuned in until the radio is on the air, then run it down. I can't very well sit with the instrument until it goes on again. By the way, did they give the time that they intercepted this broadcast?"

The colonel consulted a sheet of paper. "They got it twice yesterday. At twelve fifty-four during the day and at approximately the same time, after midnight—"

"Wait!" cried Shannon. "That would be Eastern Standard Time, which is three hours ahead of ours. Here that would have been at nine fifty-four in the morning and again at nine fifty-four in the evening. The time checked!"

"With what?"

"With Danny Higgins' story. This Danny Higgins, colonel, is quite a lad. He was a bookmaker in civilian life. He was drafted into the service only this week and has been in hot water ever since."

"I've seen his name on the reports. Isn't he the man who assaulted the first sergeant of Company G?"

"That's him! But you don't know the entire story. Sergeant Slattery hit Higgins yesterday morning—oh, quite unofficially—but the encounter took place in the basement of G Company's barracks. Slattery knocked Higgins unconscious and when Danny revived, he decided he'd had enough and was on his way to desert. Going out of the barracks through the basement, he saw a soldier with a radio set. The man overwhelmed Higgins. I met Higgins around ten o'clock and he told me about the radio set. . . ."

"You knew Higgins personally?"

Lieutenant Shannon's eyes twinkled. "Very much so! When I was a detective in the city, we had Higgins down at headquarters now and then for questioning. I was rather surprised to see him here in uniform—But to get back to my story. I returned to the barracks with Higgins, but the man had removed his radio set by that time. I found traces, however, that a set had actually been there. I was keeping it in the back of my mind when I was assigned the task of looking after Marsh, the powder expert. You know—this man who was killed outside of Marsh's laboratory last night, was found within a half hour after nine fifty-four. . . ."

Colonel Richardson inhaled softly. "You think there's a connection?"

"I do. As a matter of fact, I'm working on that assumption. The illicit radio set has something to do with Marsh and so has the murder of this man, Haichek."

Colonel Richardson nodded thoughtfully. "Marsh claims to have invented a new type of gunpowder. If the stuff comes anywhere near his claims, certain people would be interested in obtaining that formula."

"Yes, and they'd go to rather great lengths to get it. I'm afraid I've underestimated Marsh. He acts a little too much the inventor. I had him figured for an eccentric, to put it mildly. I think I ought to see Colonel Jordan at once, sir."

"Right. You're under his orders. You don't have to report here until you're ready."

"Thank you, sir."

Colonel Jordan's office was directly across the hall from that of the chief of Intelligence. Shannon knocked on the door and was summoned inside by Colonel Jordan's crisp voice.

"Ah, lieutenant! Captain Ash has just spoken to me on the telephone. This thing is getting serious."

"It is, sir. On top of everything else, that outlaw radio set was on the air last night, just before Haichek was killed. It was on the air yesterday morning, too—immediately prior to Marsh's entry to the post. I'm having a signal corps man put on it with a direction finder. We'll get the set if it broadcasts again, but that may be too late. Tell me, sir, is Marsh really going through with his test today?"

"Why, yes, that was one of the things he was here about this morning. He wanted the Camp Perry rifle team."

"You're assigning the team to him?"

"What else could I do? I told you of the orders I had from Washington regarding Marsh. The ordnance department has prepared some half-inch steel plates, to bulwark the regular targets. Marsh claims his specially loaded .30 bullets will pierce that plate up to one thousand yards."

Shannon blinked. "That's better than a half mile!"

"I've fired the range, lieutenant," Colonel Jordan smiled.

"I know, sir. Well—Marsh's powder will do it, sir."

"What makes you so sure?—I'm not at all myself. . . ."

"I know it will sir. I was fired upon this morning. From a distance greater than a thousand yards. The bullets tore through a solid brick wall—"

Colonel Jordan gasped. "You're not serious, lieutenant!"

"I am. What's more, the wall was the building in which Marsh's laboratory is set up. And I'm afraid you'll be hearing from him again—if you haven't already. About his dog."

"What about the dog?"

"Bayoneted!" Shannon winced. "While I had two sentries outside the building. I had the men guarding the footprints of last night's murderer. I was so keen on them, I neglected to set a guard at the front of the building. Someone entered it from that direction while the guards were in the rear—and killed the dog."

Colonel Jordan stared. "But, good Lord, lieutenant! Suppose they did something more than kill the dog?"

"I know. I've been thinking of that. I'm afraid . . ."

The colonel's weather-beaten face became even darker. "Where is Marsh now?"

"I haven't seen him since he was here. I thought you might know."

"He was going to the ordnance department from here. And then to the rifle range."

"With the rifle team?"

"No, merely to look things over. He intends to do the shooting this afternoon, at three o'clock. Lieutenant, if that formula has been stolen—I'm afraid charges will be preferred against you. Negligence, at the very least—"

"I know, sir," Shannon said tightly. "But I'm hoping to apprehend the murderer—and thief—before evening."

Colonel Jordan looked sharply at Shannon. "You have something on it?"

"I think so, sir."

"Then, good luck. You'll need it!"

Shannon saluted smartly and left headquarters. Grimly, he walked to the warehouse where the sentries were still guarding the doors of Marsh's laboratory.

"Has he returned?" Shannon asked the sentry in the alley.

"No, sir."

Shannon indicated the sharpshooter's badge on the sentry's O. D. blouse. "That means you've fired the thousand-yard range. Are you any good at estimating distances?"

The soldier's face flushed with pride. "You have to be, sir, to win this."

"How far is it to the end of this alley?"

The sentry sized up the distance and said, "Two hundred and twenty yards."

"And the other direction?"

"Four hundred and fifty yards. No—five, twenty-five."

"What made you change your estimate?"

"Because someone passed just then. The man with average eyesight can distinguish arms and legs on a person up to five hundred yards. Beyond that he can see just a figure, without being able to separate the arms and legs. My own eyesight happens to be unusually good and I'm able to tell at five hundred and twenty-five yards. The man I saw passing was just a blur. . . . I'm sure you'll find, by pacing the distance, that I'm right within five yards, either way."

"That's good work," Shannon said. "I'll take your word for it, because I think you're right. Now—" He moved suddenly to the wall of the warehouse and put his finger in one of the holes made by the rifle bullets.

Then he squatted down on the ground and, putting his eye on a line with the hole, turned slowly. A gleam came to his eyes. There were trees between him and the guardhouse, but beyond, because of the higher roofs, he could just make out the tops of the infantry barracks. He counted the roofs, A-B Companies in the first building, C-D in the second, E-F in the third and G-H in the fourth. It was the fourth roof-top that was in a direct line with the bullet hole.

He called to the sentry. "Sit down here and estimate the distance to the roof of the infantry barracks."

The sentry obeyed his instructions. He stared for a long moment, then uttered a slow whistle. "I don't believe it, sir. I mean, it couldn't be!"

"That's the only place the bullets could have come from."

"But that's impossible. The range is between thirteen and fourteen hundred yards—better than two thirds of a mile. In the first place, I doubt if a man could shoot as accurately as that lad did at the range. And second—no bullet would have the force those had, at that range."

"Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the bullets had the force, how many men do you know could shoot that accurately at fourteen hundred yards?"

"I couldn't. The regulation target for a thousand-yard range has a thirty-six-inch bull's-eye. Aren't many men in this army could count on hitting a man at fourteen hundred yards?"

"What about the Camp Perry rifle team?"

The sentry's eyes widened. "You mean—"

"Not necessarily. But the five men comprising that team happen to be the five best rifle shots in the United States. And I imagine some of the runners-up from the Perry matches could shoot nearly as well."

"Maybe so, sir, but you recall my telling you you couldn't distinguish a man's arms and legs much past five hundred yards. How could that fellow recognize you at fourteen hundred yards?"

"With a pair of field glasses."

"Then he climbed up there on purpose to shoot you."

Shannon shrugged, then suddenly winced. "Here comes Marsh."

The inventor wore the same shabby clothes he had worn the day before. He was bareheaded and his hands were thrust deep into his coat pockets. The habitual scowl was on his face.

Shannon started to talk to him, then changed his mind as Marsh merely grunted and moved to the door of the warehouse. He took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door.

Shannon watched the inventor enter the building. He could not have counted to three before Marsh hurtled out again, his eyes rolling wildly.

"Who did it?" he roared. "Which one of you killed Augie—"

"None of us, Mr. Marsh," Shannon said quickly. "I discovered it just a moment ago. Here"—he stabbed at the bullet holes in the brick wall to distract the inventor—"someone took a couple of shots at me."

The inventor shot a quick glance at the bullet holes and his jaw sagged. He leaped toward the wall, examined the holes, then dashed into the building. Shannon followed him.

Marsh was staring at the huge holes the bullets had made through to the inside. His mouth moved soundlessly for a moment, then a groan came from his lips.

"My cartridges!"

"Are they?" Shannon asked quickly.

Marsh nodded. He moved slowly to the center of the floor, less than three feet from the body of his dead dog, and kneeling, pried up a loose board. He reached in mechanically and brought up his hand empty.

"Of course! They're gone."

"How many bullets?"

"Five."

"Is that all you made?"

Marsh hesitated a moment, then shook his head. "I made thirty, but I left only five here. They're gone."

"Where are the other twenty-five?"

The inventor's eyes narrowed. "They're safe. I'll produce them when the rifle team is ready. There'll be five cartridges apiece for them."

Shannon's eyes drew together. "Three of your highpower cartridges were fired at me. That leaves two. Tell me—could a chemist analyze your powder?"

Marsh looked squarely at Shannon and a scowl came to his face. "The ingredients—yes. The base of all gunpowder is sulphur, nitrate and charcoal. I have some other ingredients in mine, but the secret is not in the mixture, but how the ingredients are mixed. I don't think anyone could make my powder without the exact formula." His eyes came suddenly to rest upon the skewered dog. "Somebody's going to pay for that. What I want to know is how they got in here with all those sentries you had outside?"

"That's a question I can't answer, sir," Shannon said. "I might be able to, if you'd give me a little more co-operation. If, for example, you told me who these people are that you suspect of trying to get the formula from you."

"Who else would they be but the ones who're trying to conquer the world by force?"

"But the individual agents? Are there any men that you suspect? Did you ever see that man Haichek before last night? Before he was killed?"

Marsh seemed to hesitate for just a fraction of a second before he shook his head. "No, but he isn't the only one. There are others. They spied on me in my laboratory at home. Congressman—I mean, I was promised safety here at this camp. And I haven't had it. I've a good notion to call off the tests, right now."

"I don't see what that would accomplish," Shannon said, a bit desperately. "You said, yourself, the formula's in your head. What you want to do here is merely demonstrate to the government that your powder is as good as you claim it is. You can leave immediately after the tests are concluded. And you can have as large an escort as you wish—to assure your personal safety."

Marsh's eyes glinted. "Let's try it my way for a change. You gave me a sentry last night and a man was murdered on my doorstep. Today you gave me two sentries and my dog was killed inside my very quarters. Let's try it for a while without any sentries—if you know what I mean."

Shannon's nostrils flared. "I think I do. Very well, sir, I'll withdraw the men. Your firing tests will be at three o'clock?"

"I've changed the time. Not until four."

Shannon nodded and walked swiftly out of the laboratory. Outside, he signaled to the sentries and, when they had come to attention, instructed them to report back to the guardhouse. He followed them after a short interval.

He retrieved the plaster casts he had left at the guardhouse and, carrying them under his arm, started back for post headquarters. Taking a short cut, he walked across the post baseball diamond.

Halfway across, he stopped and looked down at the ground. It was a sandy clay, rolled smooth. Staring at it, Shannon whistled softly.

Outside headquarters a soldier with the collar insignia of the signal corps sat on a folded chair, with a strange tubular instrument.

Shannon stopped and signaled the man to remain at ease. "I'm Lieutenant Shannon," he said. "Get anything?"

"Almost, sir," said the signal corps man. "The signal started to come in, but, before I could get on it, it went off. I believe the general direction is northeast, however."

"From here!" Shannon exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"No, it was a weak signal. As if the set was just tuning in, then switched off immediately."

Shannon frowned. "Try it north, by northwest. I have an idea, you'll catch it quicker than northeast."

"Very well, sir."

The bugler at the guardhouse was just blowing drill call as Shannon stepped into headquarters and he realized, to his surprise, that it was one o'clock and he had forgotten all about lunch. With some qualms, too, he thought of Danny Higgins, probably now beginning to learn what it was like being a prisoner.

In his office he placed the plaster casts on his desk and, seating himself in his swivel chair, began studying them. One of these belonged to the murderer—one or two rather. The other undoubtedly belonged to Private Danny Higgins, the curious, who had stopped to peek through Marsh's window. Unless—Shannon frowned—one of the previous sentries had been equally curious.

The moment that flaw in his reasoning presented itself, Shannon pushed the casts away. He'd have to get the footprints of Higgins and the previous sentries from Post No. 7. If they matched these, the casts were worthless. But if not—he had to find the shoes that had made the odd print. •

Shannon swore. The extra print could belong to Haichek. He had evidently peered into Marsh's window.

He sighed and reached for the telephone. "Give me the guardhouse, please," he told the operator.

A moment later, a crisp voice said: "Sergeant Milbrook speaking."

"Lieutenant Shannon of Military Intelligence. What are the names of the soldiers who walked Post No. 7 last night, on the first and second reliefs?"

"Just a moment, sir," said the sergeant of the guard. Then, "Klein-smith and Teeples, sir. They're both here in the guardhouse, right now."

"Hold them there. I'll be up later to talk to them. Now, you have a prisoner named Daniel Higgins, of Company G . . ."

"He's out on a work detail, sir. All the prisoners are, except those who answered sick call."

"Send a soldier out to bring Higgins in. I want him at the guardhouse when I come to talk to the guards. That'll be in about a half hour."

He pressed down on the receiver; then, lifting his hand, spoke again to the operator. "Get me the mortuary."

A breezy voice answered the telephone this time. "Private Stiff speaking."

Shannon couldn't quite restrain a chuckle. "Military Intelligence. You have a soldier there who was killed last night. Private Haichek of Company G. What have you done with his clothing?"

"It's bundled up, ready to go back to his company supply room."

"Hold it," said Shannon. "I'm sending a man over for the shoes. And make sure they're Haichek's shoes. I don't want any others. Understand?"

He hung up the receiver and stared at the plaster casts once more. Then he picked them up and put them in a drawer of his desk. He locked the drawer and put the key in his pocket.

Then he reached for the telephone again and called the post athletic officer. The request he made of that officer brought a protest.

"But this is Thursday. The baseball diamond won't be used again until Saturday."

"I know, but I want it sprinkled and rolled immediately. I don't want a single footprint left on the diamond, and the moment the man is through rolling it I want him to stand there and not let a person cross over it. I want it ready in a half hour. Colonel Jordan's orders."

Five minutes later when Lieutenant Shannon crossed the parade ground, he saw a soldier in denims sprinkling the baseball diamond. Another with a roller was smoothing down the moistened area.

He nodded in approval, and at that instant the crack of a rifle resounded over the parade ground. Startled, he jumped several feet. The shot was not repeated, but Shannon, moving swiftly, tried to determine the direction from which the report had come. Ashen-faced, he turned his eyes to the row of infantry barracks.

Lord! Had he been careless again! Too sure!

He went to the guardhouse at double time.

Monett was dead. Out of the clear sky, invisible death had struck him down. For a moment or two after it happened, Billings and Higgins, prisoners, milled around with the sentry, each forgetting his status, all dreading a repetition of what had happened.

Then, finally, the sentry got hold of himself. "Fall in!" he cried. "Double time down to the guardhouse. March!"

They left the mule and the cart on the road beside the dead body of Monett. They trotted down Infantry Terrace, past the infantry barracks and to the guardhouse.

The sergeant of the guard and several men were standing on the veranda, watching their approach. The sentry on Post No. 1 challenged, as was his duty, but the sergeant of the guard took over instantly.

"What's up?"

"One of my prisoners was shot—dead!" panted the sentry.

"He tried to escape?"

"No, sir. That's it. I didn't shoot him. The shot came from somewhere else. I don't know where."

The sergeant of the guard cried out hoarsely. Lieutenant Shannon burst out of the guardhouse and took command of the situation.

"Where were you at the time?"

"Infantry Terrace, sir. I . . . I had to leave him lay there on account of . . ." He gestured to the prisoners standing in front of him.

Lieutenant Shannon nodded. "Have those men brought in, sergeant. And send a detail at once up to Infantry Terrace."

Billings and Higgins came into the guardhouse. Shannon ordered Billings to wait while he took Danny Higgins into the private office. The moment the door was closed he whirled on Danny.

"All right, Danny, what happened?"

"It was just like the sentry said, lieutenant. We were working along, collecting garbage from the back doors, when all of a sudden, just as Monett was lifting a can, this bullet hit him. I . . . I caught him as he fell." His eyes fell to the bloodstains on his dungarees and a little shiver ran through him.

"Think a moment, Danny," said Shannon seriously. "Which way was Monett facing when he was struck—and where was he hit?"

Danny's eyes squinted. "Why—we were going uphill, up Infantry Terrace. So, when Monett was raising the can to dump into the cart, he was looking across the cart, that'd be almost straight west. The bullet struck him in the right side. Yeah, that'd be—"

"Almost due north, Danny. From where you were at the time, the infantry barracks were almost due north. That's what I was afraid of. Come over here, Danny. . . ."

He stepped to the window and pointed to Company G's barracks.

"Do you see, Danny? A man on that roof could see straight up Infantry Terrace. Also, he could turn almost around and see over to the warehouse on Post No. 7—"

"But, hell, Shannon!" exclaimed Danny. "Haichek was killed with a bayonet."

"I know, but I was fired at this morning. I figured the shots came from the roof of Company G—but I didn't think lightning would strike twice from the same spot. I was a fool. I didn't dream a killer would dare go back to the same spot within a few hours and try the same thing again—on someone else. . . ." His eyes fell suddenly to Danny's shoes.

"Sit down, Danny," he said sharply. "I want to look at your shoes."

"What the hell?" exclaimed Danny as he seated himself on a chair.

Shannon stooped and caught up one of Danny's feet. He scanned it a moment, then dropped it. "For a man your size, you've certainly got big feet," he commented.

Danny Higgins bristled. "What's the size of my feet got to do with it?"

"Quite a lot, Danny—I hope."

"I don't get it"

"I want to get—the murderer. Tell me, did you become at all friendly with Monett before he was killed?"

"Yeah, by tonight I'd have had everything he had. He was one of them. I got that much out of him, but he didn't get to tell me who the others were. I played up to him, showed him the roll I had. It didn't faze him at all. He had as much, or more."

"More than how much?"

Danny Higgins chuckled. "I won eight hundred bucks last night. Most of it from my pal, the top sergeant."

Shannon gasped. "With your educated dice?"

Danny bristled indignantly. "Educated dice nothing. They belonged to the gamekeeper, a fella name of Yoskin. I never use crooked dice. It's skill."

"What do you mean, skill?"

"A card expert learns how to handle cards—me, I learned how to handle dice. I can throw any point I want with a pair of dice."

"And how much did Sergeant Slattery lose?"

"Over six hundred bucks. They must pay him a big salary."

"A first sergeant gets eighty-four dollars a month, Danny."

"Then where'd he get all the money? He was crackin' about payin' alimony to a couple of women, too."

"That, Danny, is something I'd like to find out myself. Of course, he may have won the money before you got into the game."

"Uh-ah. They were razzin' him about playing half dollars. The ser-

geant's a tightwad. The only reason he plunged was because I got him so mad he didn't know what he was doing."

Shannon sighed wearily. "Look, Danny, we've got to get the killer today. And we've got to do it before five o'clock. The rifle tests start at four and by the time they're over I must know everything there is to know—because I've a hunch it won't do me any good to know after that. It's two o'clock now and I've got a lot of things to do. I can't handle it all."

"Anything I can do, holler," said Danny. "But I can't do much here in the clink."

"That's true. I'm having you released at once. Go back to the barracks. I don't care what you do, but snoop around. Try to learn two things: where Sergeant Slattery got all his money—and where there's a radio-broadcasting set. The set might be as small as six-by-nine inches, and the wire from it might be attached in some manner to the regular day-room radio set. I'll try to get in touch with you before I go off to the rifle range at four o'clock."

Two minutes later, Danny Higgins was walking back to Company G barracks. Sergeant Slattery, looking out of the window of the orderly room, saw him and sprang to his feet. He met Danny in the doorway.

"Cripes, can't they even keep you in the guardhouse?"

Danny put his tongue in his cheek. "I bought my way out, Slats. With the dough I won from you last night."

The first sergeant reddened. "I'm going to check up on that, Higgins. There's something damn screwy about this—and you."

"You go ahead and check up, pal," Danny said flippantly. "When you get through you'll find me in the day room."

The "day room" is the company clubhouse. It is kept up partly with funds contributed by the soldiers themselves—usually fifty cents a month, deducted from their pay. The day room generally contains a pool table, some checkerboards and a limited supply of books and the favorite current magazines.

In midafternoon, when the company was at drill, the only soldiers in the day room were the K. P.'s snatching a half hour from their kitchen duties and the goldbrickers, the few who perpetually get out of drill or work, with some excuse of being "sick." Some soldiers will even take C. C. pills to get an occasional day off from drill.

The company clerk, two K. P.'s and three goldbrickers were playing a spirited game of Kelly pool for fifty cents a cue.

One of the K. P.'s was just racking up the balls as Danny came in. "I'm in," he cried.

"Colonel Higgins," one of the players commented. "You can't keep a good man down."

"Ain't it the truth?" Danny grinned as he selected a cue.

"This is a double," one of the pool players said. "Cost you a buck if you lose."

One of the men shook up a leather bottle and rolled out small, numbered balls, which the various players caught and quickly put into their pockets, so the others could not see the numbers.

Danny, looking at his own pea, saw that he had drawn No. 14—a bad number. Being a newcomer, he naturally drew last turn to shoot, which in this case was No. 7. The K. P. broke the balls with ill grace, but the 15 ball accidentally fell into a pocket. He was sewed up on the 1 ball, however, so slammed viciously into the balls, setting up the 1 and 2 for the next player, who pocketed them, and the 8 ball as well.

The company clerk swore and threw a half dollar on the table. "Mine was the 8 ball."

The third pool player missed completely, as did the fourth and fifth. The sixth man sank the 3 ball and swore when he made the 4, but missed the 9 on a combination shot. It was evident that No. 9 was his ball, which meant that if he made it he would collect a dollar from every man in the game. He did, however, make the 5 ball and collected a half dollar from one of the players.

And now it was Danny's turn. There were only two dead balls of nine remaining, exclusive of his own. He had an easy shot for the 6 ball, but after studying the table for a moment, said:

"Combination on the 10."

He fired almost without aim. The 6 ball dropped into a pocket and the cue ball, ricocheting, went across the table, hit a cushion and then dropped the 10 into a pocket.

"A pool shark!" one of the players exclaimed as he dropped a half dollar on the table. "The 10 was me."

"No one on the 6?" Danny asked, grinning. He looked over the table. "I think I'll bank the 7, just for fun."

He did and another half dollar dropped on the table. The 8 ball was already gone and the one player had given away the fact that the 9 ball was his, so when Danny pocketed it, he collected another fifty cents. That eliminated all the live balls but Danny's own. He calmly knocked off the 11 and 12 and then announced cheerfully that the 14 was his own ball. "But I'll make it the hard way. I'll sink the 13 in the corner pocket, then drop the 14 in the side—on a three-cushion shot!"

"If you do that," grated the harsh voice of Sergeant Slattery, who had just come in, "I'll eat the balls."

"Better back down on that, sarge," advised the company clerk. "This fellow's been sleeping on pool tables, the way he uses that cue."

"Willie Hoppe couldn't make that shot," snapped Slattery.

"Wanna bet?" Danny asked innocently.

"That you'll sink the 13 in the corner, then make the 14 in the side

pocket, after the cue ball touches three cushions?"

"That's the bet. How much, sarge? Not too much, because you'll have to be shooting snipes if you lose—after all that dough you lost last night."

"I've got plenty where that came from," Slattery snarled. "I'll bet you twenty bucks you can't make that shot."

"That's a bet!"

Danny chalked his cue deliberately and took careful aim before he let his cue hit the cue ball. The 13 smacked into the corner pocket, the cue ball ricocheted to a cushion, hit the side rail and zipped toward the 14 ball—missing it by six inches!

Danny swore. "Damn! The cue slipped."

"Slipped hell!" cried Slattery exultantly. "Pay me twenty simoleons."

"Put the balls back where they were and I'll try it again—double or nothing."

"Cocky little devil," sneered the first sergeant. "But I'm through with you. Pay me and hang up your cue. I've got a little job for you."

Danny groaned. "Again?"

"Again. But first give me that money."

Danny took his fat roll from his pocket and peeled off a twenty. The sergeant snatched it from his hand and gestured to the door.

As Danny walked past the sergeant, the latter reached over and flicked on the switch of the radio. In the hall he reached out and caught Danny's arm in a savage grip.

"I want you to run over to the Letterman Hospital and ask when Corporal Zingoni is coming back to the company. And don't lose any time on the way. Beat it!"

There was a strange, yellow glow in the sergeant's eyes. It seemed to Danny as if the sergeant was hoping he would refuse to run the errand. He nodded.

"The hospital's down near the gates, isn't it?"

"It is. The entrance is just this side of the 'Y.' Now, hurry up."

Danny clattered down the front stairs as Slattery entered the orderly room. Danny walked to the end of the building, then dashed in between G Company barracks and the one used by Companies E and F. He ran around to the rear, burst into the kitchen and, before the surprised cook and K. P.'s could say anything to him, shot through the dining hall into the corridors.

From there he tiptoed to the orderly room. The door was slightly open and he peered in. The room was empty. Drawing a deep breath, Danny pushed open the door. As he stepped into the room, the faint clickety-click-clack of a telegraph instrument came to his ears.

The sound came from straight ahead, from behind a closed door, the first sergeant's private bunk room.

Danny started for the closed door on tiptoe. He reckoned, however, without the cumbersome army shoes and a loose board in the orderly room. The board squeaked and Danny, moving his foot away hastily, brought it down on an adjoining board too hastily.

Sergeant Slattery's door was jerked open and the frightened face of the first sergeant appeared.

"Higgins!" he gasped, "you—" His hand made a swift movement and a huge .45 army automatic came up and covered Danny. "Step in here, you dirty, spying . . ." Slattery snarled.

Danny had seen plenty of pistols and revolvers before, but in civilian life no one carried a gun larger than a .38. This .45 looked like sudden death to Danny.

He stepped forward. "I wasn't doing anything, sergeant. I just wanted to ask you—I mean, I forgot the name of the man you told me to ask about. What was it—Prysabilski?"

Sergeant Slattery lunged out of his bunk room, gripped Danny's dungaree jacket with his left hand and jerked him forward. His right hand lashed up—and the sun and the moon and all the stars in heaven exploded on Danny's head!

9

It was three-fifteen when Lieutenant Shannon left the group of high-ranking officers and walked out to the center of the baseball diamond.

Top Sergeant Slattery of Company G brought the squad of soldiers to attention and, saluting Lieutenant Shannon, reported: "Rifle team all present, sir!"

Shannon looked at a slip of paper. "Corporal Spencer!"

"Here!"

"Privates Dunnigan, Fenwick, Lacy, Sullivan!"

All reported present. Shannon nodded. "You men compose the rifle team. Privates Kleinsmith and Teeple, you're to work in the rifle butts. You know your duty. Now, you men of the rifle team, you've each been given five rounds of service ammunition, which you're to fire on the thousand-yard range. You're to do your very best. The targets will be examined after you've fired the five rounds and then you will be given five rounds additional—special cartridges using a new type of powder. You're to fire these with as much care as you do the regular ammunition. A great deal depends on the accuracy of your shooting, and I don't need to remind you that a number of officers will be watching. Attention! Squad left—march!"

Sergeant Slattery shot a quick look of surprise at Lieutenant Shannon, then fell in beside the squad and marched off the baseball diamond with them.

Lieutenant Shannon remained behind. He started to turn away and just then James Marsh came toward him.

Shannon exclaimed in chagrin and hurried to meet him. "You're to go with the officers, Mr. Marsh," he said, gripping the inventor's arm.

Marsh shook off his hand. "I'll go with whoever I please!" he snapped and cut across the diamond after the rifle squad.

Shannon gritted his teeth as he watched the irate inventor cross directly over the footprints of the rifle team. Then he signaled to a man who stood at the edge of the field, holding a large galvanized waterbucket.

The man came forward and Shannon took the bucket and the same atomizer he had borrowed that morning from the wife of Major Fox. "Stay at the edge of the field," he instructed the man, "and head off anyone who tries to cross."

The rifle team was out of sight by now, as were the officers who had watched the assembly.

Shannon's eyes gleamed as he studied the footprints that had been made in the smoothly rolled baseball diamond. He had them all—the five best rifle shots in the country, each of whom would have no difficulty in shooting a man at a range of fourteen hundred yards. He also had the two extras, the men who had been sentries on Post No. 7 before Danny Higgins. He'd had them assigned to the rifle team for one purpose only, to have a good excuse for getting plaster casts of their footprints. Shannon hoped, however, that neither of their prints would match one of those already in his possession. He hoped—and expected—that one of the other five would match it, however.

He picked out the footprints in turn and sprayed each with the shellac. He scowled as he came across the footprints of James Marsh, which had almost destroyed one of the best prints of the lot.

The spraying finished, he took up the bucket of mixed plaster of Paris and poured the stuff into the prepared prints breaking the fall of the mixture with a big spoon. There were a couple of quarts of the mixture left over when he finished and, as he waited for the casts to harden, he suddenly chuckled and, picking up the atomizer, sprayed the footprints of both Sergeant Slattery and James Marsh. He also filled them with plaster of Paris.

After about five minutes, he tested one of the casts and found it sufficiently hard. He took out the slip of paper from which he had called the roll and, as he took up a cast, wrote the soldier's name on it with a pencil, using the roll-call positions as the key to the men's names.

The nine casts were a pretty big armful. In fact, Shannon had to use both arms to hold them and then, as he was starting off the field, an excited man came dashing up.

"Lieutenant Shannon, I've located the radio set!" Shannon almost

dropped the casts. "Where is it?" he asked the signal corps man.

The man grimaced. "Let me explain, sir. It came on the air almost an hour ago. I got it instantly—you were right about the northwest direction. It remained on the air for over two minutes, but the message that was being sent was broken off after less than thirty seconds. That's what I wanted to explain, sir. It seemed odd that they would keep on the air for a minute and a half after sending the message. Previously, they've cut off the instant the message was concluded."

Lieutenant Shannon frowned. "It sounds almost as if they were interrupted. But get to the point—where is the radio?"

"In the orderly room of Company G!"

"In the orderly room? How do you know?"

"Why, my direction finder placed it somewhere in G Company's barracks, sir. I ran over and took a look at their radio in the day room, then traced down a wire that ran from the set—quite ingeniously attached, sir—to the orderly room. The room was locked, however, so I thought it best to locate you. I've been searching for you for some time."

"The orderly room was locked, you say?" Shannon asked sharply. "What about the company clerk? He ought to be there, at least."

"I didn't see him, sir!"

Shannon stared across the parade ground with a perplexed scowl on his face. Then he suddenly reached out his load of plaster casts. "Take these to my office at headquarters. Guard them as you would your life . . ."

He left the man standing there and started for Company G's barracks at a dead run. A corporal on the veranda sprang to attention as he pounded up the short flight of stairs. He caught hold of the door-knob and rattled it furiously. The signal corps man had told him the truth. It was locked.

"Beg pardon, sir," the Company G corporal said to him, "the door's locked. Sergeant Slattery locked it before he went out."

"Where's Captain Ash?" Shannon snapped.

"He's officer of the day."

Shannon swore under his breath, then ran back to the veranda. He peered through the window into the orderly room. Nothing seemed out of order, but—was that a noise inside?"

He drew back from the window. "Corporal," he said, "I'm going to break in this window. You may report to Captain Ash that Lieutenant Shannon did the damage. Step aside—"

He raised his foot and pushed in the glass, then reaching in, unfastened the window latch. A moment later he stepped over the sill into the room. And, yes—there was a pounding behind the door of the first sergeant's bunk room.

Shannon leaped to it. "Danny Higgins?" he cried.

Shoes kicked the door on the inside. Shannon stepped back. "Look out, Danny, I'm breaking it in!"

He lunged at the door, putting every ounce of his weight into it. The thin door panels splintered, but held. He drew back again and tried once more. His shoulder went through the panels.

A moment later he was stooping over a bound and gagged Danny Higgins. There was dried blood on the side of Danny's head, but he was more angry than hurt.

"I caught him, the dirty rat!" Danny cried, the moment the gag was removed from his mouth. "He had the radio in here and I caught him sending a message. He switched on the radio in the day room, then chased me off on a fool errand to get me out of the way. But I ran around the barracks and came in from the back and caught him. He . . . conked me."

"That'll be the last time, Danny," Shannon said ominously. "I'm going to close up this case. Come along—"

"The radio!" Danny cried. "It's gone. He'll deny that it was ever here."

"He can't. A signal corps man traced it here. He removed it, but it won't do him any good. I've got enough evidence on him to send him to prison for a good many years. Come!"

"His gun's gone, too, Shannon," said Danny. "He's scrambled!"

"Not yet. I know exactly where he'll be until five o'clock. It's ten minutes to four now. We've got enough time."

Outside, Shannon headed for headquarters and his office.

Shannon led the way into his room. Danny Higgins exclaimed, "What the devil are those, stone feet?"

"Plaster casts, Danny. You'll see . . ." He took a key from his pocket and unlocked a drawer of the desk. From it he took three casts. He extended two of them to Danny. "Those are your own feet, Danny."

"Where'd you get them? So that's why you were examining my feet in the guardhouse?"

"Right. You left those prints under the window of James Marsh's laboratory when you spied on him. I also found this other footprint there—along with some blurred ones that were no good to me. I'm hoping that this footprint was made by the man who killed Haichek."

"But how can you tell? Even if it's the same size as another shoe you'll find, you know that these army shoes are as like one another as a bunch of beans."

"To the ordinary eye, Danny. Actually the soles of a man's shoes are as distinctive as his fingerprints. The nails in them will be worn down differently; there'll be little cuts and scratches on them—absolute identification. You'll see." He exhibited the cast in his hand. "See this one? Very well, now, we'll match this cast with the ones on the desk—made

within the last half hour. Here's Sergeant Slattery's. I got it by accident."

"That's it!" Danny said viciously. "The skunk!"

But Lieutenant Shannon exclaimed in chagrin. "It isn't Slattery's, Danny! Look. Slattery's shoes are a full size larger than this cast."

"You must have got them mixed, lieutenant," cried Danny.

Shannon shook his head. "No, I was very careful. I called the roll of the rifle squad and marked down their positions opposite their names. Sergeant Slattery was in front of the squad and I couldn't possibly have confused his prints with the others. Well, I'll have to try the others—Corporal Spencer's cast . . ."

He compared it with the master cast and laid it aside. "Almost the same size, but Spencer's shoes were new compared to these. Dunnigan—no similarity—Fenwick, no. The same for Lacy. Also for Sullivan."

He groaned. "That leaves only Kleinsmith and Teeple's, the sentries who were on that post just before you went on. Damn it, it would have to be one of theirs!" Halfheartedly, he made the comparison. Then he stiffened. "It isn't! None of the prints match. The murderer is someone else—"

"But you've left one cast," said Danny.

Shannon waved impatiently. "That's Marsh's foot. He had to walk across the other prints and I had some plaster of Paris left, so . . ."

Idly, he placed the murderer's cast beside that of James Marsh. Then he exclaimed in astonishment and caught up both casts and turned them over. His eyes studied them.

Danny Higgins whistled.

"Marsh. Well, I'll be—"

"He may have an explanation," Shannon said soberly. "After all, it was his laboratory. He could have gone outside and looked into his own window. He could—"

He stopped.

Faintly, a rifle shot came to his ears. Then another and another. "They're shooting on the range. In a few minutes—" His eyes widened suddenly and he inhaled sharply.

"Danny, run out and commandeer a car. We've got to get to the rifle range as fast as rubber and gasoline can carry us." He was scooping up the two plaster casts as Danny pounded out of the room.

When Shannon hit the sidewalk, Danny was running out into the middle of the street, yelling and waving his arms at a olive-drab limousine. The car swerved wildly as the driver applied brakes.

Lieutenant Shannon rushed for the car. He was reaching for the tonneau door, when his eyes caught sight of the two stars on the windshield. He winced and drew back, as a flushed, irate face came forward.

"What's the meaning of this, lieutenant?" a crisp voice crackled.

"I beg the general's pardon!" Shannon apologized. "I'm from Mili-

tary Intelligence and it's extremely important that I get to the rifle range just as fast as I can get there. It's—a matter of life and death!"

"The rifle range? Heh—jump in. Goin' there myself. . . ."

Shannon jerked open the door. "All right, Danny, in beside the chauffeur." He plunged into the tonneau, stumbling over the general's booted feet.

The car leaped away as Shannon was getting himself settled beside the general.

"I'm the corps commander," the general introduced himself.

"I know, sir. Major General Walworth. I—You've heard of what's been going on around here?"

"Got the report this morning. That's why I'm here. I don't understand it. That crackpot inventor's powder can't be any good. Don't see why anyone should want to kill anyone else over it."

"I'm afraid the powder is everything that Marsh claims it is," said Shannon.

"Eh? How d'you know? They're still testing it, aren't they?"

"I saw an advance demonstration, sir. At fourteen hundred yards the bullet tore through a ten-inch brick wall."

"Impossible! And where could you have seen an advance demonstration? My information is that Marsh has been acting like a genius—cagey and all that."

"There's the range," said Shannon. "I hope I'm not too late."

"Too late for what?"

The chauffeur of the general's car twisted the wheel and began applying brakes. As the car screeched to a stop, Shannon sprung open the tonneau door and leaped out.

A group of officers were standing in a line behind five prone riflemen, looking out across a long flat field. In the distance, five squares of paper, each with a black dot in the center, stood up. They looked no larger than postage stamps. Actually, the black dots were thirty-six-inch bull's-eyes. The targets were a thousand yards distant.

Someone cried, "Attention!" and everyone on the range swung around.

General Walworth saluted carelessly. "Thought I'd come and see the demonstration, gentlemen."

Colonel Jordan stepped forward. "Glad to have you with us, sir. The men have just concluded firing the regular ammunition. Some remarkable shooting. One man scored five bull's-eyes! Oh—this is Mr. James Marsh."

There was a disdainful look on Marsh's face as he extended a limp hand to the general. "Surprised you found the time, general," he said sarcastically. "Or didn't the war department think it important enough to tell you?"

General Walworth regarded the inventor calmly. "You think this

powder of yours is pretty good?"

Marsh waved his hand toward the targets "See those targets? They're backed with half-inch armor plate. You, there, with the telephone! Get the report from the rifle butts."

The man with the telephone was a major. He reddened under Marsh's peremptory order, but nodded and spoke into the mouthpiece. Then he listened a moment, after which he said, "Thank you."

He put down the telephone. "Not one of the bullets did more than make a nick in the armor plate."

"See?" cried Marsh. "Those are the regular cartridges. They didn't scratch the plate. My own will pierce it—every damn bullet."

"I hope so, Mr. Marsh," Major General Walworth said easily.

While this conversation was going on, Lieutenant Shannon and Danny Higgins were circling the group of officers. As they cleared them, First Sergeant Slattery of Company G dropped to his knees beside Expert Rifleman Fenwick.

He spoke sharply to the man, then took the rifle from his hands. Shannon, tight-lipped, saw that the bolt was open and the rifle empty. He breathed a little freer.

Danny Higgins started past Shannon. "There he is, the damn spy!"

"What's that?" snapped Slattery.

"I said you were a damn spy."

Slattery came to his feet. "Lieutenant Shannon, you've protected this man long enough. He's assaulted me, has been insubordinate, and I insist that you turn him over to me. I'm preferring charges against him."

Shannon laughed shortly. "So you're going to bluff it out?"

"I don't know what you mean, lieutenant," Slattery said doggedly.

Shannon half turned and spoke to Colonel Jordan, who, with Captain Ash of Company G, was coming toward him. "Colonel Jordan," Shannon said, "I'm placing this man under arrest. The charge is the murder of Private Monett—"

"You're crazy," Slattery cried hoarsely. "You can't frame me. That sneaking crook beside you told you a cock-and-bull story."

Captain Ash shook his head soberly. "Lieutenant Shannon, Sergeant Slattery has been in the service for over fourteen years."

"Has he, captain? I looked up his service record at headquarters. He joined your company exactly six months ago—within a week of the time Privates Monett and Haichek enlisted!"

"But Sergeant Slattery was transferred from the 47th Infantry—"

"Exactly," cut in Shannon. "And the 47th Infantry is stationed at Fort Snelling, Minnesota. First Sergeant Slattery of the 47th had twenty years of service behind him when he was transferred to your regiment and company—but how do you know that the Sergeant Slattery

who left Fort Snelling is the Sergeant Slattery who reported to you?" Captain Ash gasped. "What do you mean, lieutenant?"

"I mean that something happened to the original Sergeant Slattery and that this man acquired his papers."

"Begging your pardon, Captain Ash," Sergeant Slattery said desperately. "Lieutenant Shannon has been influenced by that recruit, with whom I've had so much trouble. This morning he actually assaulted me on the parade ground. I had him arrested, but the Lieutenant had him released from the guardhouse and this afternoon—well, sir, he attacked me in my own quarters and I had to knock him unconscious—in self-defense. . . ."

"And did you have to tie his hands and feet and gag him, too?" Shannon asked.

"Here, here, what's all this about?" rumbled General Walworth, coming up.

Colonel Jordan saluted the general. "You got my report of what happened at the post last night? And today? Two men were murdered—"

"Yes, yes," General Walworth nodded to Lieutenant Shannon. "Is this man your murder suspect?"

Shannon drew a deep breath. "If you'll give me a few minutes, sir, I'd like to give you the complete story—"

"The hell with that stuff," interrupted Marsh. "I'm ready to have my own cartridges fired now and if you officers haven't got anything better to do with your time, I have."

"This concerns you more than anyone, Mr. Marsh," Shannon said. "That man was killed outside your door last night."

"So what? He didn't get what he came after and he had it coming to him. I want to complete these tests and get out of here. I promised to make a report today."

"To whom?" General Walworth asked bluntly.

"To Congressman Steinman. You know who he is, don't you? Chairman of the committee on—"

"Yes, yes," General Walworth cut Marsh off. "I know who the congressman is, but your report can wait a few minutes. Lieutenant Shannon, go ahead."

"Thank you, sir. I'll make it brief. A man named Haichek—who happened to be Colonel Jordan's orderly at headquarters—was found murdered last night, outside the door of Mr. Marsh's laboratory. He was found by the sentry on the post, Private Higgins here. He was killed by a bayonet. This afternoon, while Mr. Marsh was away from his laboratory, someone got in, killed Mr. Marsh's dog and stole five of Mr. Marsh's new cartridges—"

"A lot of good they'll do him!" snapped Marsh.

"Four of the cartridges are already gone," Shannon went on. "The

thief wasted three of them, shooting at me. The fourth he used to shoot a prisoner—a man who happened to be Haichek's buddy. The odd part of all this shooting is, it was done at extremely long range. The laboratory of Mr. Marsh is fourteen hundred yards from the roof of Company G."

"Company G?" cried Captain Ash.

"Company G," repeated Shannon. "I'm sorry to say your company has figured in this right from the start. I forgot to mention that I also received word that an illegal radio sending set has been operating in the post—and it was finally traced down to your company, captain. Haichek was from your company, Captain Ash. So was Monett, who was killed this afternoon—"

"So is Higgins," snarled Sergeant Slattery. "And if you ask me, he's behind all this trouble. He just got into our company and we never had any trouble until he came."

"Higgins has been my assistant," Shannon said. "It was he who first saw the illegal radio in the basement of Company G. He saw it there shortly after you knocked him out yesterday—and the owner of the radio repeated the trick. I should have guessed at the time when Danny Higgins told me that the man had a wallop as heavy as your own—Hold it, Sergeant!"

Sergeant Slattery slammed shut the bolt of the rifle in his hands. "I'm damned tired of all this. Throw up your hands, Shannon!"

"Sergeant Slattery!" cried Captain Ash. "What are you doing?"

"I'm holdin' this rifle," Slattery retorted. "It's only got one shell in it, but that's a good one. The fifth bullet that I stole from Marsh—Yeah, I killed Monett—and Haichek."

"Not Haichek, Slattery," said Shannon.

The sergeant's eyes glowed. "Whaddya mean, not Haichek?"

"You couldn't have killed him. Because at the time he was killed you were in Company G's squad room, gambling. Danny Higgins checked on that."

"Then who did kill Haichek?" Slattery sneered.

"Your employer, Slattery."

"What the hell you talkin' about?"

"The master mind," Shannon said ironically. "There were three of you planted here, Haichek, Monett and yourself. You received your pay for services rendered. But Haichek and Monett turned yellow—or wanted to quit—just as the really big job came along. Monett, to get protection, had himself thrown into the guardhouse. It didn't do him any good—"

"He's the man," James Marsh said suddenly. "He's the man who peered into my window last night and who killed Haichek— Look out—"

He suddenly threw himself to one side and whipped a .38 automatic from his pocket. He threw it down on First Sergeant Slattery.

Lieutenant Shannon cried out and lunged for Marsh. The inventor side-stepped and collided with Danny Higgins who was springing upon him from the other side. Marsh lashed at Danny, who took the blow of the pistol in his face. He yelled in pain and fell back.

Then Marsh whipped the gun around again to Sergeant Slattery.

During all this, Sergeant Slattery stood at the ready, the Springfield rifle partly raised and the muzzle of it moving back and forth as the figures swayed about. His face was taut and a little gray. As Marsh's automatic turned upon him for the second time, Slattery pulled the trigger of the Springfield.

The bullet lifted Marsh completely off his feet and hurled him to the ground upon his back.

Smoothly, Slattery worked the bolt of the rifle and swiveled it toward Shannon. The bolt clicked harmlessly. Slattery threw the rifle to the ground.

"All right," he said tonelessly. "It's over!"

Corporal Spencer of the rifle squad came forward and touched the muzzle of his rifle against Slattery's spine. "This one's loaded," he said.

"He was going to kill me," Slattery said. "He was going to kill me to keep my mouth shut. The game was up for me—but he was going to protect himself."

"I know," said Shannon. "Marsh was the man!"

"Marsh?" cried Colonel Jordan in a tone of awe.

Shannon nodded. "I had the evidence. These plaster casts. One is of the footprint of the man who killed Haichek. . . . This other cast I got at the baseball diamond just awhile ago. It matches—"

"But why?" asked Colonel Jordan.

"Marsh wanted to sell his formula to another country, one that offered him money instead of honor. But he'd used the facilities of the Achilles Powder Co. for his experiments. They knew what he was working on. So Marsh conceived the idea of having the formula stolen. It had to be done dramatically to be convincing. So he came out here for the demonstration,—by the success of which, I imagine, he also hoped to raise the price. Haichek was a good instrument for melodrama—a spy who had lost his nerve. Monett came into the same category. . . . And after two murders, the theft of a formula would become sufficiently convincing."

Danny Higgins walked up to Sergeant Slattery. "What do you think of the army now, sarge?"

Slattery told him.

Danny grinned disarmingly—and hit the sergeant on the jaw. He had forgotten to take the plaster cast out of his hand.

ANTHONY BOUCHER

Two very popular mystery writers of the day are "Anthony Boucher" and "H. H. Holmes" and both of them are Mr. William Anthony Parker White of Berkeley, California, a prolific young writer with a scholarly passion for detective literature that has made him an able commentator and reviewer in that field. Outstanding among his novels are *The Case of the Seven of Calvary* and *The Case of the Baker Street Irregulars*. His services to literature include also a number of admirable translations of short stories by the admired French writer Georges Simenon. In *Code Zed*, a clever short story, we see the inevitable German agent at work in America, but with a new twist to the story that will please and perhaps startle you. Wolfgang Amadeus Ritter was christened for Mozart by his Viennese parents and there is a swift, mathematical, Mozartian precision in the movement of the tale that does no injury to its other excellent qualities.

CODE ZED.

"**E**IGHT!" Wolfgang Ritter commanded as the elevator started to rise.

"Five!" said a British voice behind him, and steel pressed the base of Ritter's spine.

They got off at five. Ritter did not turn his head. He glanced at the portly executive waiting for the down elevator as casually as though he were the most ordinary salesman visiting the building on routine business.

"This way, old boy," the Englishman suggested, and emphasized the direction with a prod in the back. Ritter's face was expressionless as they marched down the corridor.

The door said THE WESTMINSTER TRADING COMPANY.

The Englishman said, "Here we are." His right hand unlocked the door while the left remained in the pocket next to Ritter. The sagging pocket ruined the drape of the faultlessly tailored coat.

Ritter went first into the room. Rolltop desk, telephone, two chairs, wastebasket, green metal files. Most such shabby small offices omit the combination padlocks on the files.

The Englishman's teeth bucked out between a faint mustache and a fainter chin. He said, "The amenities, what? Captain Hughes-Hargrave, at your service."

Ritter bowed and clicked his heels. "Wolfgang Amadeus Ritter."

"No von und zu? Not even a von? Come now, old boy, mustn't have the lower classes too active."

Ritter nodded at the door. "What is the trade?"

"Trade? Oh, dear old Westminster. Touching name, what?" He drew the automatic from his pocket and glanced ruefully at the drooping cloth. "You got Code Zed from Holzheim this morning. You were bringing it to your headquarters upstairs."

"You are not asking," Ritter observed. "You are telling. Also, what is the use to lie? Your men are efficient." His eyes gazed over the Englishman's shoulder.

"Bit of a compliment from a German. Teuton efficiency and all that. Yes, old boy, we muddle through."

Ritter said nothing. His stare was still fixed behind Hughes-Hargrave. The Englishman started to shift his eyes, then laughed. "Sorry, old boy. No use. Bit more subtle than shouting. 'Who's that?' but no use in the world. But as to Code Zed. Can't have this sort of thing going on, you know. Foreign spies dashing about our dear old ally snapping up codes. Won't do, old boy."

"You are not foreign?" Ritter asked levelly.

"Blood brother and all that. Common tongue, common culture. Bit different from a bloody Hun." The automatic balanced in his hand lightly, almost playfully. "Do I get Code Zed simply, old boy?"

Ritter looked at him coldly. "No."

"Dash it, that's sheer Hunnish perverseness. Calculate your chances."

"No."

"I'm no simpleton, old boy. I'm not coming around patting your pockets till you snatch my Webley." He yawned. "I went last night to something called a Girlie Show. Fascinating American custom, the strip tease. Professional possibilities . . ."

Ritter stood motionless.

Captain Hughes-Hargrave made a sharp motion with his armed hand. "Start in." He whistled a slow lugubrious version of *Roll Out the Barrel* as Ritter began to undress.

The Webley was never more than an inch from the Englishman's hand as he examined the garments. A razor blade ripped open seams, slit the soles from the shoes. He grinned up at the naked German.

"Don't fret, old boy. Never should have worn a double-breasted coat with those shoulders anyway. Overemphasis. Remember that."

Hughes-Hargreave was not smiling when he finished his search. "Our information was correct, old boy. You do have Code Zed, you know. Tell Uncle."

"The principle of the code is of the simplest. Papers would be cumbersome."

"Cumbersome, old boy, if you don't mind. Wore a crimson one for dinner when I was stationed in Kuala Lumpur . . ." His tone changed slightly. "So you memorized it! Dash it, hadn't realized that was possible. You will make trouble for us."

The Englishman picked up the phone, dialed, and said, "I like a bustle that bends." He replaced the mouthpiece and deliberately dialed the number again. "Count the clicks all right? No use. We change the sentences every day."

Ritter nodded at the phone. "Colonel Jeffreys?"

"Right, old boy. You do get about, don't you? Hate to take such measures. Humanity and all that. But Jeffreys is a good man on naughty boys who memorize codes."

"I have much heard of the Colonel."

"Don't doubt it. Dash it, I could do with a spot of tea . . . I say, old boy, you're shivering. Take my trench coat over there. No, nothing in the pockets. And now, while we wait—I dare say you've never played cricket?"

Hughes-Hargreave had reached the day that he made a century playing for England when the key grated in the lock. He rose and saluted the short heavy-set Colonel. "Our German friend's been a bit clever. He memorized Code Zed."

Colonel Jeffreys grunted and sat down. He bit at a cigar and lit it carefully. "I hate tobacco," he announced to no one. "But we'll start with the cigar. Much more satisfactory than cigarettes. Burns longer."

Hughes-Hargreave jerked off the trench coat. Ritter stood while the Colonel's small red eyes roved up and down his body. "Arm pit first," he decided at last, and rose.

The Captain was near the window. "Jove!" he exclaimed. "The stars in their courses and all that."

Colonel Jeffreys joined him. He looked out, then laid his cigar down on the desk. Hughes-Hargreave pocketed his Webley and restored the trench coat to the German. "Reprieve, old boy."

The window cleaner swung himself over from the next office, adjusted his belt, and set to work. He looked in uncuriously. Two men were seated by a desk, one was standing. There was nothing more to be seen.

Hughes-Hargreave leaned forward. "It's your chance, old boy. Your one and only. We don't want to use these methods. Tell us what you know."

"No."

Colonel Jeffreys grunted and fingered the cigar. Ritter's hand reached up to shield his arm pit.

"I'm warning you, old boy, that'll be only the start. The Colonel was with the Black and Tans. He was dashed successful, you know. Make it easy for all of us."

Ritter's lips formed "No," but no sound came.

"I understand, old boy. You have your ideals, we have ours. A man has to follow what he believes. But it's hopeless now. You can see that."

Ritter stared at the door.

"Come now! Not again. Blighter tried that on before," he explained to the Colonel.

"He's not trying it on," Jeffreys grunted. "Noise at the door."

Hughes-Hargreave listened and rose. The two Englishmen moved silently toward the door. There was a metallic scratching outside.

"If this . . ." the Captain began. His sentence was lost in a crash of glass. He turned to find Ritter lifting a pistol from the shards of the window. There was another in the hands of the window cleaner.

The door burst open as Hughes-Hargreave fired futilely.

Wolfgang Amadeus Ritter, christened for Mozart by his Viennese parents, accepted the hand of the F. B. I. official. His wounded shoulder ached with the handshake.

"We've got them cold," the government man assured him, "on failing to register as agents of a foreign power. We checked with the Yard, of course; they were both prominent in British Fascism till it got too hot for such games over there. We may have other charges against the Colonel. We've heard rumors for a long time of this expert torturer."

"It was good to be bait," said Ritter simply. "I have seen what can happen in my own country. I must help you to prevent it here."

"Good man. But," the F. B. I. man grinned, "if the department has to deal with many Englishmen like that pair, and many Germans like you and your Underground friends—well, it's going to be hell keeping things straight."



AUGUST DERLETH

August Derleth began his writing career at 13. He began to publish at 15, and has been appearing in print pretty consistently ever since. He is 35 years of age as this book goes to press and has written and published some thirty volumes of poetry and prose, the latter division including essays, short stories, novels (light and dark), mysteries, and biographies. He writes from 750,000 to a million words annually and consequently gets a lot done. He has written under a number of pseudonyms. His most ambitious work is the Sac Prairie Saga, a projected life-story of the region in which he was born, planned to include upwards of fifty books in nearly all the departments of literature. His hobbies are fencing, swimming, hiking, chess, stamp collecting and collecting comic strips; and how do you suppose he gets time for any of them? Derleth is fond of mysteries of every description and is the creator of Judge Peck, a fictional sleuth of stature. His short story, A Battle Over the Tea-Cups, is an early performance, a clever conception which pushes that old situation of the drugged wine one layer deeper, psychologically speaking, than most other stories in the field.

A BATTLE OVER THE TEA-CUPS

THE TRAIN WAS STOPPED just out of Mukden. Flying American and British flags hadn't done much good, though it was pretty certain no harm would come to any one on board. Word flew from compartment to compartment that the northern war lord, Wah Hsu-Liang, would presently come on board in search of some one.

I was standing in the corridor, talking to a high-caste Chinese, who, with a woman, occupied the adjoining compartment, when the word went around.

"This is very annoying," I said.

The Chinese smiled composedly. "There is no need for alarm, my dear sir. There will be only a short delay. You foreigners are constantly beset by visions of bloodshed. This is both foolish and bad for the nerves. We Chinese are like a big family, quarreling among ourselves; we do not like bloodshed, however, and we refrain as much as possible from it. But shedding the blood of innocent foreigners is something we avoid with all our hearts. Be content, for even in the temporary absence of the Japanese guards who are usually along the railroad, the war lord will be careful to shed no blood."

He paused to smile benignly at the woman, who was devilishly pretty for a Chinese. She bowed her head a little and smiled back.

"As for his search," he continued blandly, "as a matter of fact, Mr. Shaw, I think General Wah is looking for me. He does not love humble Mr. Lu-Gen."

His speech had the unpleasant effect of making me immediately conscious of tense danger. I knew enough of Manchurian politics to realize that the elusive nationalist secret agent, Mr. Lu-Gen, had on more than one occasion blocked the policies of General Wah, as well as those of the Japanese with whom Wah "collaborated." Mr. Lu-Gen's blandness belied his own concern, surely. There might, indeed, be blood shed in the compartment next to mine. Lu-Gen's espionage had long been a thorn in the side of the Japanese and their puppets; the modest Chinese who stood beside me seemed to have rallied behind him: not only the force of Chiang Kai-shek's government, but also a great intangible army of Chinese patriots who came out of nowhere at his bidding and disappeared into nowhere after extraordinary exploits of sabotage and espionage.

"Aren't you in grave danger?" I asked.

"Everything is possible," said Mr. Lu-Gen, without a flicker of emotion. "Yet, it is believed that so long as a man keeps his head, danger keeps its distance; it moves in closely only when a man is frightened."

He turned to the woman and said in Chinese, "Go now to the dining-car and bring tea, for the General will presently discover me, and perhaps he will not object to taking tea."

I retired to my own compartment, leaving the door open in the hope that I might hear what went on between the General and my traveling acquaintance, whose modest demeanor and humble appearance made it difficult for me to believe he was indeed the secret agent, Lu-Gen, upon whose head a price had long been set by the Japanese.

Presently General Wah entered the car. He was a tall, heavy man, with long, drooping moustaches not very well cared for. Hostile newspapers usually described him in a Chinese phrase meaning "big man with the small brain." His eyes, I saw as he stared insolently into my compartment, were hard and sharp. He withdrew in a moment, and paused before the adjoining door.

Mr. Lu-Gen did not give the General time to speak. "I dare to believe you are looking for me, my dear General," he said in rapid Chinese. "I am humble Lu-Gen."

The General made no direct reply. He merely turned and shouted orders for guards to post themselves at each end of the coach and suggested, none too politely, that no one leave his compartment. Then he turned and went into Mr. Lu-Gen's compartment, leaving the door wide open.

That was a lucky break, for not only could I hear distinctly what was going on, but I could also see what action centered around the small reed table my neighbor had set up. This was made possible by the position of a mirror on the corridor wall opposite Lu-Gen's compartment. The woman had returned with tea, and went about placing the cups.

"There are matters about which I wish to speak to you," said General Wah without preliminaries.

"Quite so," replied Lu-Gen in a soft voice. "But I dare to hope that you will take tea with me before we discuss these matters?"

"Tea I will take," the war lord said bluntly, "but it is not necessary to defer our discussion. It will not be long." His voice had an ominous note in it.

The woman poured tea, and cut a lime fruit in two.

"These matters—?" suggested Lu-Gen calmly.

The war lord smiled grimly: "On the twenty-seventh of the month past you withdrew my store of ammunition from the vicinity of Kirin."

Mr. Lu-Gen nodded agreeably. "Because, had it been discovered by the Japanese moving upon Harbin, it would have been confiscated. The ammunition is in my hands, awaiting your pleasure."

His reply somewhat disconcerted the General. Before he could continue Lu-Gen took from his pocket a small lacquer box, from which he shook a white powder into his cup. "I am under the impression the General does not like sweetening in his tea?" he said, a smile touching his lips.

"Quite right," said the General shortly. "To go on," he continued, "on the first of the present month, you arranged for a large body of my troops to be held over at Tungsi junction, which made it impossible for me to surprize Chansin on the following day as I had planned."

"That was done because I had knowledge that Japanese would fight against you."

"But the Japanese were in the far north."

"Ostensibly. But remember that surface peace often hides danger. Many Japanese were hiding near Chansin, in wait. It is desirable for them that you be removed."

The General, who tried to hide his collaboration with the Japanese, was not faring well, but he continued to hurl accusations at Lu-Gen, who parried them with great skill. At length the General asked a question: "Will you be so good as to sign an order releasing my ammunition and stores from the place where you have hidden them?"

Lu-Gen looked at him without expression. "And if I do not desire to sign?"

The General's reply came like a bolt from the sky. "Then I am afraid we must execute your son, whom we have the great honor to have held as hostage since we took him from your secret house in Chinchow a

week past. We must execute him in the desired fashion. I will send you his limbs, and his ears, and his tongue, and also, if you wish, his eyes, for you to look upon."

Lu-Gen continued to look at the General meditatively. Abruptly he said: "I will sign. But be careful that other things do not interfere. You are being watched by the Japanese. It will probably go ill with you when it becomes known that you have stopped this train."

"On the contrary, I have Japanese permission. They foolishly hoped I would spill blood."

"You are wise, General Wah," said Lu-Gen and he wrote out the desired order.

At the same moment, no doubt at a sign from Lu-Gen the woman dropped the tea-pot, and in the instant that the General's head was turned, Lu-Gen dropped something into the General's cup of tea. It was clumsily done, and the General had seen it from the corner of his eye. The two Chinese faced each other over the tea-cups, the General's expression grim.

Lu-Gen broke the tense silence. "Shall we drink, General?" he asked, bending courteously forward.

The General nodded curtly, and Lu-Gen lifted his cup to his lips.

"Stay," said the General crisply. "We drink together."

"If you will thus honor me."

"And I will drink the cup you have prepared for yourself, and you will drink that you have prepared for me."

Lu-Gen raised his eyebrows in astonishment. Then an expression of pain crossed his face. In a low voice he said: "My ancestors writhe in torment at your unvoiced accusation, General."

"You will drink with me as I have said," snapped the General.

Lu-Gen bowed. "Very well," he said gently, and took the cup from the General's hand. The General took Lu-Gen's.

Together they raised the cups and drank the tea. Lu-Gen's face was white and strained, but the General was smiling, his white teeth gleaming from beneath his straggly moustache.

"And my son?" asked Lu-Gen weakly, sinking back with closed eyes.

"He will be sent safely home, as I have promised. It is not a custom of mine to break a promise—even if it is made to Lu-Gen, who will soon, I hope, be no longer my enemy." His inference was unmistakable.

Lu-Gen clutched spasmodically at his bosom. The General had risen and was staring down at him in satisfaction. "You have won another battle, General," said Lu-Gen in a low voice. "Allow me the honor of complimenting you."

The war lord smiled sardonically and left the compartment, pulling the door shut after him. In a little while the train began to move. . . . What I had seen was like a melodrama. I kept my eyes fixed upon the

closed door of the adjoining compartment, expecting something to happen. But nothing whatever happened; so I got up and knocked gently on the door.

"Can I be of any assistance?" I asked in Chinese.

Lu-Gen himself threw open the door. He did not look as if he had just taken poison. He smiled broadly at the expression on my face and said: "Mr. Shaw appears surprised. I observed you watching and listening in the mirror before your own door, and hope you were sufficiently entertained by our unedifying conversation. It is not often that you see deadly enemies in friendly converse."

"But I thought— Surely you dropped something into the General's cup?"

"Ah, can it be you believed I was trying to poison him?"

"What else could I think?"

"I merely dropped sugar in the General's cup. I arranged for him to see, knowing that his suspicion would be aroused."

"And into your own?" I asked.

"Shall we say—a sleeping-powder?" he said blandly, smiling at my incredulity. "My dear Mr. Shaw, I fear you, like General Wah, are inclined not to be troubled by the obvious, but only by those events which seem to be strange. It was most trusting of General Wah to read my words and my smile, and understand my 'sugar' so innocently put into my cup, without knowing my intent."

I understood that for some reason Mr. Lu-Gen had deliberately brought about the exchange of cups. And I felt a little incompetent and began to have a new respect for Lu-Gen's modesty and humility. "Do you think he will release your son?" I asked.

Mr. Lu-Gen smiled almost boyishly. "Ah, you accept too much of the General's patter. My son is quite safe in Chungking. The General, coming upon a youth resembling him and arrayed in his garments in my house in Chinchow, foolishly took him to be my son. He is a big man, the General, but there is no room for thought. He jumps to conclusions, a habit I have noticed also in you Americans."

He smiled at me, and began to close the door. As I turned away, he added "But even he who jumps at conclusions may often touch truth, though he follows not its devious paths. Perhaps some day soon we may speak of the General in the past tense."

It was only two days later that the Peiping papers announced the death of the war lord of the north, the Japanese puppet General Wah Hsu-Liang; he had died in his sleep the previous night, it appeared. As I read the brief story in my hotel-room, I saw once more the bland face of Mr. Lu-Gen, and heard him saying, "Shall we say—a sleeping-powder?"

VINCENT STARRETT

Somebody else ought to write this note, of course. I have known Mr. Vincent Starrett for some 57 years and have alternately loathed and loved him; I mean of course his work. The present example of it seems to me to be in his second manner, which isn't quite as good as his first or quite as lame as his third. The story gets into the book because it is Mr. Starrett's only spy story and he would like to see it preserved among so many better specimens of the genre. Also, parts of the story seem to him rather attractive—that episode of the Japanese corpse, for instance. He loves Japanese corpses and does them rather well, he thinks. The Shanghai background is fairly accurate; the author lived there and in Peking for a number of years and stored up in his memory a lot of nice little touches. The incident of the Japanese agent in Anne Garrick's bedroom, by the way, in case you are interested in story germs, is quite true, except that the girl's name wasn't Anne Garrick. It was—well, never mind what it was! The involutions of the mystery are fairly ingenious, I think; but of course I'm prejudiced. Mr. Starrett will be happy if you like his story and a little hurt if you don't; but if you don't like the really good stories in this book, by Maugham, White, Morris, Buck, et al, he'll have a very low opinion of your taste.

DILEMMA AT SHANGHAI

THE EXPLOSION of shells continued at intervals throughout the night. First a whine, then a shriek, and then—somewhere in the distance—a reverberating roar. The Japanese cruiser off the far end of the Bund was firing across the settlement into the shambles of Chapei. There was a mathematical rhythm about the performance that was almost soothing, after one had accustomed oneself to the situation, and Macdonald slumbered peacefully into the early hours of the morning. Then the racket became annoying. He groaned, turned over in bed, and at length sat up, reaching sleepily for the discarded coverlet.

Crash-bang! screamed the shells in the distance; and again, outside his door, there was what seemed a thunderous echo of the uproar. Close at hand voices were calling loudly.

"What the deuce?" murmured young Mr. Macdonald.

After a moment an explanation occurred to him. Somebody was thumping—indeed, banging—upon his door. And after another moment he caught the word that was being repeated excitedly in the long corridor of the hotel. The word was "*Fire!*"

Awake at last, he bounded out of bed and groped wildly for his shoes. Then, hastily tightening the cord of his pajamas, he hurried to the door, snapped back the bolt, and dashed out into the corridor.

A faint odor of smoke was evident, and somewhere beyond the turn

of the passage the excitement still lingered. Whatever Paul Revere had awakened him was still probably upon his rounds. . . . "One if by land and two if by sea," murmured Macdonald, with mild anxiety. . . . There appeared, however, to be no immediate danger. Here and there along the corridor, doors were being opened and tousled heads were popping forth. The electric lights burned dimly.

He turned back into his bedchamber, snatched a bathrobe from the foot of the bed, and returned to the corridor. It was fairly certain that the fire was concentrated somewhere beyond the well of the stairway. Possibly it was in the other wing of the hotel. . . . He hesitated, then pushed forward in search of it. As he strode, he reflected bitterly and profanely on the situation that had made this rude awakening possible.

"The blasted fools!" said Macdonald, thinking of the warlike little yellow men sweating behind the guns of the Japanese cruiser. For it was obvious, he thought, what had happened. A shell had fallen short of its objective and smacked the hotel. The thing was happening constantly in all parts of the settlement.

An agitated official of the hostelry, half-clad and apologetic, undeceived him. It was not a shell that had fired the hotel. It was impossible to say what had caused the blaze.

"I am so sorry," said the young Chinese; "but there is no more danger, I think. The fire is not a large one. It was found in an old closet—where the boys keep their brooms and things like that. It is not serious. I do not know who has made all this disturbance. Who was it that waked you, please?"

"Somebody with a loud voice," said Macdonald, annoyed. He stifled a yawn. A number of other guests were now clustering around the embarrassed official. "He hammered on my door and shouted 'Fire!'"

"I am very sorry," repeated the young Chinese. "I am afraid that somebody has, as you call it, lost his head. It is, I think, quite safe to return to your rooms. I am very sorry!"

The thin odor of smoke had perceptibly diminished. The young Chinese continued to abase himself. The guests muttered and drew their garments more closely around their shoulders. In the distance the little yellow men were continuing their deadly calisthenics. Crash-bang! cried the shells, falling into looted Chapei, and the little hotel seemed to vibrate with the explosions.

Macdonald stifled another yawn. "Good-night," he said, with ironic good-humor. "Don't hesitate to call me, in case of fire."

He returned to his room, his bathrobe flapping around his ankles, and paused in the doorway. A little voice inside him was trying to tell him something.

The door, which he had just opened, had not been closed when he

left it; the light above his dresser, now burning brightly, had not been snapped on. He had left the room in darkness and in haste.

Another matter engaged his attention. One of the drawers of his dresser was standing half open. He crossed the room and looked inside, then opened other drawers. He glanced quickly at his bags, standing on a low rack at the foot of the bed, and after a moment knelt down before them. The buckles of the straps were loosely fastened, and when he opened the bags he saw what he now expected to see.

There was no doubt whatever of what had happened during his brief absence. His room had been thoroughly inspected; every drawer, every bag, had been deftly searched and put to rights again. The evidences were small but sufficient.

That meant, of course, that his garments also had been searched. His billfold he carried in the jacket of his pajamas, which he had on; but there was some loose change in the pockets of his trousers, which hung across a chair. It was still there, however—all of it, as far as he was able to judge. His wallet, with all his papers in perfect order, was still in the jacket of his linen suit that hung on a chair-back. On the stand, beside his portable typewriter, was the long descriptive dispatch upon which he had been working before turning in. It seemed silly to believe that anybody could be interested in that. It would be examined by the censors, anyway.

His other garments were in the closet; but there could be nothing in the pockets, surely, that anybody would care to steal. Or could there?

He crossed the room with swift strides and jerked open the closet door—then leaped away in sudden panic.

Something inside had moved. Something that had been braced inadequately against a corner of the door-frame. It moved again—slipped—slid—slithered—and fell with a crash to the floor, half inside and half out.

"Good Lord!" said Macdonald, almost reverently.

It was the body of a man in the garments of the Chinese people; but the face was Japanese. There could be no question of nationality. . . . The thing sprawled awkwardly across the doorsill, face upward.

For a long moment the correspondent stared, mute, at the spectacle. His heart was beating rapidly. He was quite frankly frightened. A series of questions ran rabbitlike through his mind; but they did not get beyond the first incredulous words of interrogation. . . . What . . . ? Who . . . ? Why . . . ?

Then his legs functioned, and again he was in the corridor, racing for the stairhead. He plunged headlong down the curving steps and brought up, panting, at the night desk, where sat the young official, looking weary and unhappy.

Macdonald babbled out his tale.

"A dead man?" echoed the Chinese. He was incredulous. "A Japanese? But this is very serious, Mr. Macdonald!" He hesitated, looking dubious. "You are quite sure that . . . ?"

"That any of it happened? Oh, yes, I'm sure! Go up yourself. The body's there to prove it."

The Chinese wrung his long fingers. "But this is really very serious," he repeated nervously. "I think—I think we must get a policeman."

The correspondent thought so, too. Together they advanced into the deserted lobby and passed through the front door to the doorstep. The booming guns were sounding ominously close. Over Chapei's sky there was a red glare. Beyond the doorsill, like guardians of a temple, stood two men in uniform—half policemen and half soldiers—with bayonets fixed. The young manager poured out the history of his trouble in passionate Chinese. His vowels crackled like exploding fire-crackers. The policemen listened with impassive faces, glancing occasionally at the correspondent. The three men spoke among themselves.

After a time the procession reversed itself and strode back across the lobby. In the corridor that led to the death chamber the men trod softly and spoke in whispers.

"Ah!" said the correspondent suddenly.

"What is it?" The young manager was very nervous.

"That door again! I'm sure I left it open when I ran out. Now it's closed!"

The manager clucked softly; his eyes were frightened. "Perhaps you have forgotten," he suggested, and spoke again in his own language to the policemen, the foremost of whom shoved forward and thrust himself against the door.

It opened without difficulty. Inside, the light above the dresser was still burning. Beyond the edge of the door was visible a motionless human leg, clad in blue coolie cloth.

"At any rate," said Macdonald, "you see that I was telling the truth."

He followed the policemen into the chamber and stood behind them as they knelt beside the body. The young manager brought up the rear.

"This is terrible," said the manager, in his precise English idiom. "Quite terrible, my dear sir! But—*what is this?*" He bent suddenly above the body. "You told me this man was Japanese."

"He's Japanese, all right," grunted the correspondent. "You ought to know that better than I. He's wearing Chinese clothing; but he's—"

He interrupted himself and, in his turn, knelt quickly beside the body. For an instant there was silence. Then the American's breath sucked inward, with a whistling sound, as he rose.

"That's not the body!" he said. His eyes were popping. "That's—it's another corpse! I'll swear I'm not mistaken. It's lying right where the

other one was—but that's not the fellow who fell out of the closet!" He passed a hand across his eyes. "Am I going crazy?" murmured Allan Macdonald.

The manager and the two policemen looked at him with pity and amusement.

II

"It's wild, isn't it, dear?" said Anne Garrick.

"Insane," agreed Macdonald. "But I saw the other body as plainly as I see you now. Oh, it was there, all right! The only question is: why was it there? And what happened to it? And why was the hall boy killed and put into my—Oh, blast!" said Macdonald.

They sat at luncheon on the top floor of the great Occidental Hotel, beside a window that looked out upon a segment of the Whangpoo, in which lay long gray battle cruisers sleeping in the sun. The incredible war was for the moment silent, but in the distance, over Nantao and Chapei, rose the gray vapor of destruction; it lay in dusty wreaths and question-marks along the sky.

Macdonald tried again. "I can imagine some half-witted Japanese agent investigating my room; that's easy. They prowl in everybody's room, just to see what they can find. It happened every day when I was in Japan. But why should he be murdered in my room? If he was murdered, I don't know how he died, of course. I was too excited to examine the body. But however he died—hang it!—why should his body be stashed in my closet? Was he the beggar who was looking over my things? There's nothing to prove it. Was he there—dead—in the closet, when I went to bed? I didn't look inside. Now there," mused Allan Macdonald, "is a cheerful thought! It hadn't occurred to me before. He wasn't there yesterday, anyway. As for the replacement. . ."

"The reason for the replacement, darling, is obvious enough," smiled Anne Garrick. "Whoever did it thought you wouldn't know the difference. You are now supposed to think you must have been mistaken. That there was no Japanese in your room at any time, and that the whole episode was Chinese and probably a simple case of burglary."

"I suppose so," growled the correspondent. "That's one I got by myself. In which case, who am I supposed to think killed the Chinese? They must think me an awful fool!"

"How was the Chinese killed? I suppose you noticed that."

"Knifed—in the back."

"Well, he was murdered, anyway," commented Miss Garrick brightly. "That's one fact to the good. You're not carrying any important secrets on your person, I hope. If so, the next attack will be on you—yourself—personally! No stolen treaties or submarine plans or anything like that?"

The correspondent grinned. "I also read E. Phillips Oppenheim."

Out of a corner of his eye he noted a tall man in uniform making his way across the crowded restaurant toward their table. He twisted in his chair and stood up. The newcomer came up rapidly. He was a giant of a man, over six feet in height, in the uniform of an American officer of marines.

"Hello, Mac," he greeted, shaking hands. "I saw you come in a little while ago, and tried to catch your eye." He bowed a trifle humorously to Anne Garrick, whom he did not know. "Have you heard the news?" he finished in a lower key.

"Captain Tyler, Miss Garrick," muttered Macdonald hurriedly. "No, I haven't! What's happened that I ought to know?"

The captain dragged up a chair and sat down. He leaned across the table confidentially. "I could be court-martialed for telling you, I suppose," he laughed; "but it will be all over town before long, anyway. Besides, it's England's funeral, not ours. O'Donnell has been murdered."

"O'Donnell? Who the dickens is—Oh!"

"That's the man," agreed the captain; "and he's been murdered. He's England's Lawrence-of-Arabia in these parts, Miss Garrick, except that his name is O'Donnell and his field is China and Japan."

"Holy Moses!" said Macdonald. "And I have a deadline in New York in—" He consulted his watch and made an abstruse mathematical calculation. "In less than an hour," he finished. "What else do you know, Tyler? I mean, who—?"

"It happened last night sometime," said the captain, "in his room at the old Soochow Hotel."

The correspondent almost yelled, and Anne Garrick squealed her astonishment.

"That's my hotel," cried Macdonald. "I didn't know he was there. Good Lord, Anne, do you realize—?" He broke off, staring.

"So it is," said the captain. "I'd forgotten that. You didn't bump him off, yourself, I suppose? But, seriously, that's where it happened. The big fellows always frequent these little native places, you know; probably for the same reason you do—they want privacy. But I'm surprised you didn't hear some rumor of it around the hotel. Wasn't there any excitement?"

The correspondent was thinking desperately. "There was a fire there—last night—and a Japanese was killed—and then a Chinese." He spoke slowly, piecing the thing together, as it might have happened. "Now why the deuce," he asked, "was I involved in this?"

"You weren't," said Anne Garrick. "It's the names—don't you see? Macdonald and O'Donnell! They got them mixed. They got into your room first, and later discovered their mistake. It's the sort of thing a Japanese would do."

Macdonald nodded. "You're probably right," he agreed.

"Do you mind telling me what you are talking about?" asked the captain; and then he listened with amazement to the correspondent's story.

"It's a wonder you weren't murdered," said Anne Garrick warmly.

The captain nodded. "Miss Garrick is right," he said. "You'll never be closer to it than you were last night—unless it actually happens," he added thoughtfully. "You see the situation, don't you? Your testimony makes it clear that Japan was responsible. That dead Jap in your closet—however he was killed—betrays the plot. The removal of the body and the substitution of another was an effort to pull the wool over your eyes."

Macdonald got hurriedly to his feet. "Just the same," he said, "I've got a story to get off, if it's the last thing I do in China." His eyes were shining. "What a story!" he murmured; and was suddenly self-conscious. "Look here, Tyler, you'll stay with Anne won't you, until I get back?"

"Not me," said the captain, promptly and ungrammatically. "I'm going with you to the cable office. Nobody's going to trouble Miss Garrick, and there's a lot of trouble lying in wait for you. Of course, you didn't hear this story from me!"

"Of course not," agreed the correspondent. He looked dubiously at Anne Garrick. "Well, all right! I've simply got to go, Anne. You can see that, can't you?" Her eyes smiled, and Macdonald suddenly chuckled. "You've got that little pistol I gave you, if you don't like the way somebody looks at you!"

She laughed and nodded. It was quite a joke between them, that little pistol. There was some question whether Anne would know which end to use in an emergency. Neither she nor young Mr. Macdonald, in point of fact, had ever fired a weapon in their lives.

"I'll wait right here," she promised. "I won't go any farther than the lounge." She sipped her tea and smiled again. "Captain Tyler is right, Mac. Nobody is going to trouble me."

In this, however, neither the captain nor Miss Garrick was correct.

She watched them thread their way across the restaurant and vanish near the elevators, then returned to her tea and salad. After a time she paid the bill that the correspondent had forgotten and strolled into the lounge, where a tableful of magazines and newspapers—only a month old—awaited her pleasure. She ignored them, however, and dropped into a big chair beside the window, to smoke a cigarette. She was faintly worried about Mac, relatively a newcomer to Shanghai, who seemed to think his American citizenship a rabbit's foot guaranteed to protect him against anything. She knew better than to believe any such nonsense. Macdonald had been in Shanghai barely a year and a

half. From the dizzy heights of her own three years' residence in the port, as the daughter of a minor oil company official, she smiled down at the correspondent a little patronizingly. Her knowledge of the language, too—slim as it was—gave her somewhat the upper hand of the rather cocky newspaperman whom she had determined to marry.

The curtains moved again. A man in uniform entered the lounge, glancing idly about him. He was short and plump and rather like a robin, she thought. A Japanese robin. At sight of her his eyes lighted with recognition. He came forward, smiling.

"How happy!" cried the robin. "I am so pleased! It is the so-beautiful Miss Garrick, is it not?"

This was condescension with a vengeance! At any rate, they had not sent a stupid boy to market. Nor had any grass sprouted beneath the military shoes of the Japanese intelligence, reflected Anne Garrick, half humorously.

"I am Major Kanaya," added the paragon, with simple majesty. "But perhaps you do not remember me?"

Miss Garrick was both amused and alarmed.

"But of course, Major Kanaya," she answered, with a little smile. "We met once at an Embassy tea, I think."

"And danced," cried Major Kanaya rapturously. "Do not forget that, Miss Garrick, please! For me, it is one of my memories."

"It is good of you to remember," said Anne Garrick. "That was, of course, before these unhappy days in which we are now living."

"As you say, that was two years ago." The major sighed. "Alas, that such times have come to us! I am so sorry about it all. Would you be so good, perhaps, as to care for a cup of tea?"

"Thank you, but I have just had my cup of tea. I am . . . waiting for a friend." As well to learn at once, she thought, what it was this sleuth was after. Information, she supposed. She had been seen in conversation with Macdonald, and of course they would want to know how much the correspondent had told her.

"A friend—ah, yes," sighed the major. His little mustache quivered, his full lips parted in a smile intended to be roguish, his gold teeth gleamed. "If, by chance, it is the handsome young reporter, Macdonald, for whom you wait, I must admit that just now I saw him leaving the hotel. These young newspaper men!" he shrugged. "They are not—how do you say it?—responsible, I think. They get a story, as they call it, and away they hurry to a cable office, forgetting everything but their strange duty to a million readers whom they have never seen! Ah, well, he is a nice boy," said Major Kanaya generously, "a very charming young man. I know him well. We are excellent friends, Macdonald and I."

He was not too subtle, she reflected. And, after all, why should he be?

They both knew what it was the major wanted. Each knew, if he knew anything at all, precisely what the situation was.

Miss Garrick also shrugged. "He left in something of a hurry," she volunteered, with an appearance of frankness. "I wondered what it was about. Has something important happened, to make him leave his luncheon?"

The major shrugged again. His impeccable shoulders rose and fell heavily. "Who can say? The port is always filled with rumors. Most of them untrue! But what does that matter to our gay young correspondent? He did not mention, then, the matter that was upon his mind?"

Well, there it was—the direct question! Mac would want her to lie, of course; and this popinjay would probably expect it. Wherefore, why not lie? No point in stalling—in talking about Tyler and a mysterious message. She lied without a trace of hesitation.

"Not a word," said Anne, and smiled into her inquisitor's eyes. "Perhaps he didn't trust me. Do you think that's it?"

The major's answering smile acknowledged his defeat.

"Impossible!" he cried. "But I am so sorry we cannot have a cup of tea together. Perhaps another time! And now I must not bother you any more, I think. Good-bye, my dear Miss Garrick. If I can be of service to you, I shall be so happy."

He would have cut her throat as readily as he touched her hand, she reflected, and shuddered a little when he was gone. Others, she supposed, already had gone after Mac and the captain. Had she done her friends a disservice by not holding the major in conversation? But her own duty, just now, was obviously to stay where she was and wait. No doubt there would be a procession of polite young officers visiting the lounge. Perhaps some of them would not even be polite.

An idea seized her. She would call her home, then take a room at the hotel. She would leave word at the desk where she was to be found when Mac came back. It was a capital idea, and it pleased her. If anything happened to keep Mac from her, she would be more likely to get his call in her room than if a page went searching her.

She left word with the restaurant cashier of her intention and, descending to the crowded lobby, signed the register in her boldest hand.

"I am expecting a call at any minute," she told the clerk. "Please see that it is put through at once."

From her own room, then, on the fifth floor of the hostelry, she called the cable office; but Macdonald and the captain had not yet arrived.

"Have Mr. Macdonald call me, please, when he comes in," she requested, and turned to open her door, on which a soft knock had fallen while she was speaking.

A squat and slovenly young man in blue coolie cloth entered casually, carrying a long mop and a pail.

"Clean windows, Missy," he explained, and began at once upon his task, running the water noisily in the bathroom while he filled his pail.

"But I don't want the windows cleaned," cried Anne, annoyed. "This sudden efficiency is ridiculous. I want to lie down and go to sleep."

"No clean windows?" The young man was incredulous. "No sweep floor, take off bed cover?" Such inattention to the details of comfort and cleanliness, his manner indicated, was beyond him.

"If the floor needs sweeping it should have been done earlier," said Anne, exasperated. She looked at him keenly. Was it possible the man was not Chinese at all, but Japanese? Was her encounter with the major making her too suspicious? Yet surely she had seen this face before.

"Bring ice-water?" asked the young man stolidly, eager to please.

"No, go ahead and wash the windows, if that's what you came in for. Get it over quickly."

Half-reclining on the bed, a cigarette between her lips, she watched him as he rapidly performed his task. With mounting indignation she realized the espionage that was being practiced upon her. Mac's call was what they wanted now, no doubt; or any calls that she would make herself. When he had finished she spoke angrily.

"Now do them again, you lazy rascal," she commanded, in Chinese. "And do a better job, this time! Yes every one of them. Go over them again!"

The windows were done over, this time with greater care.

"Now sweep the rug," said Anne, "and wipe the floor around the edges. Don't miss an inch!"

The young man meekly obeyed. She studied the planes of his face, the angle of his jaw, as on hands and knees he crept around the room.

"That's better," she observed when he had finished. She fumbled in her handbag. "Here is ten cents for you, Captain Takahashi," she added, smiling scornfully. "The last time we met, I think, was at an Embassy reception, was it not?"

The dustcloth fell from the young man's hand and fluttered to the rug. He turned slowly and looked into her eyes.

"And when you leave the room, close the door quietly behind you," said Anne Garrick.

For the first time he smiled. The thick lips opened, disclosing the usual array of gold fillings among bold white teeth.

"But I am not leaving the room, Miss Garrick," said the captain softly.

He moved slowly toward her across the soundless rug.

"Keep back," said Anne. "Get away from me, you—you-monkey!"

Once more she cried "Get back!" and tried to scream; and after that there was no time for either speech or screaming. . . .

Flung backward across the low bed, with rough hands pressing against her mouth, for an instant she relaxed, then wriggled free and rolled swiftly to the floor, dragging the light coverlet with her. Her bag, which had been in her hand, fell with her to the floor and spilled its contents on the rug. . . .

The pistol!

It was underneath her hand. What was it Mac had said about a safety catch?

Her fingers closed around the butt, and immediately something rough and hard was just below her thumb. She pushed it downward. . . .

"Keep back!" she whispered, staring up at him from the floor.

Her eyes were wide with horror; but the hand that held the little weapon did not shake.

The Japanese laughed and sprang.

She did not hear the sound of the explosion. She only knew that she had squeezed the trigger and that the body that had fallen heavily upon her was now a dead weight on her own. There was no sound or movement in the corridors. There was no sound or movement from the captain—only the intolerable burden of his weight across her face and breast.

After a time she struggled free and staggered to her feet. Her telephone was ringing. *Mac!*

"Yes," she whispered, in answer to his question. "Yes—I'm here! Come quick!"

III

They looked down upon the body of the captain, in his Chinese garments—the girl in horror, the marine officer with a certain satisfaction, Macdonald in complete bewilderment. The correspondent's eyes were popping. Over Nantao the uproar of exploding shells had begun again. They exploded with a mathematical precision that made it possible to predict the moment of the next. *Crash-bang!* Like that. *Crash-bang!*

"Takahashi?" repeated Macdonald. He raised his voice. "This is a Captain Takahashi?"

"Oh, yes," she told him, shuddering. "There isn't any doubt of it. I've met him any number of times. As soon as I remembered, I knew exactly who he was."

"And I know, too," said Macdonald. "He's the fellow who fell out of my closet—dead—at three o'clock this morning!"

"What?" cried the marine officer, like a character in the pictures.

After a moment he dropped a hand on his friend's arm. "Take it easy, boy," said the captain kindly. "This has been a bit of a shock for you, I realize. After all—"

Macdonald was annoyed. "I'm not crazy, Tyler," he insisted. "I've just tumbled to what happened. I tell you I recognize this man. He's the other dead man! But he wasn't dead then, of course. He was shamming. Don't you see? He'd been looking through my things and he heard me coming. The fire was his job, too. Well, he slipped into the closet and closed the door, hoping I'd go away. But I didn't. When I opened the door on him, he took a chance and crashed! He knew what I'd do—and hanged if I didn't do it. I left him there and dashed out of the room for help. As soon as my back was turned, he hopped to his feet and—"

"And went to the right room and murdered Mr. O'Donnell," said Anne Garrick, in sudden excitement. "He'd already found out his mistake."

She was beginning to feel a little better; but Macdonald's arm around her shoulders was still necessary. It wasn't pleasant to have killed even a murderer like Takahashi.

The captain nodded. "You're probably right," he admitted. "Very clever of Takahashi, too! But I'm glad he's dead at last." A moment later he frowned. "It's a bit of a mess, though; or hadn't that occurred to you? What are we going to do with this body?"

They looked at one another for several moments. It was an embarrassing dilemma.

"What his intentions were with Miss Garrick, we shall never know," continued the captain. "Disgrace? Kidnaping? Perhaps even murder! And why? To stop you, my friend, in your headlong career. It's just as well you made no accusations in that dispatch of yours. All we really know is that O'Donnell's dead—that somebody killed him. That ought to be enough of a 'beat,' for the time being. Now Takahashi's dead, and —" The captain shrugged. "We know the truth, of course; but we're not in a position to prove it."

There was another silence.

"If it were my room," said Macdonald, at last, "I'd just pack him in the closet and leave him there. That's where he was the last time I saw him, after all. I'd discover him accidentally and tell the management."

"That's what we have to do in this room," said the captain. "It's all we can do. Miss Garrick took the room less than an hour ago. Well, a few minutes ago—just before you called—she happened to look into her closet, and immediately fainted. When she came around, the telephone was ringing. She told you what she had found, and you hurried to the scene. What's wrong with that? Who's going to contradict it, in view

of all that's happened? The Japanese know what this man was up to; but they're not going to admit it. I think they're going to keep their faces shut. Let the British discover who murdered O'Donnell—I'll drop them a hint, if you like! But you haven't accused anybody. No, I think our little friends will simply call it a draw—or perhaps one-up for Allan Macdonald. But you'll have to watch your step, boy, in the future. The Japs won't like you."

"They don't like me, anyway," said Macdonald.

The captain stooped and plucked the pistol from the rug. "I'll just take this with me when I go," he said. "There's no blood to speak of. Now you and Anne look out of the window for a minute, will you, while I put this fellow in the closet?"

They turned their backs until the gruesome business was accomplished. A chuckle sounded behind them.

"Well, well," said Captain Tyler briskly, closing the closet door, "what an extraordinary story, Mac! A dead Jap in your closet, you say? And as soon as your back was turned the body vanished and another took its place? And then the first body was discovered in another closet in a different hotel? Darned if I understand it—but it would make good reading, I imagine."

The correspondent grinned and tightened his arm around Anne Garrick's shoulders.

"I wouldn't dare to print it in a newspaper," he confessed. "But I might write it as fiction, and pretend I made it up. Say, there's an idea. By George, I think I will!"

STEPHEN LEACOCK

We now approach the end of our jaunt into the land of espionage and intrigue, and speaking for myself, I think we've had a pretty good time of it. We have had a wide and varied bill-of-fare (or, let us say, itinerary, not to mix the figures of speech); we have seen how important to war and politics is the intricate system of espionage; we have learned that a spy's work, although romantic, is not always conducive to perfect health. Comes now the great Canadian humorist, Stephen Leacock, to free us from the fetters of prevailing ideas. A great human being was Professor Leacock, and a curious paradox, for he was not only a famous humorist but a serious scholar of high distinction, head of the department of political science and economics at McGill University. In this he resembles Prof. C. L. Dodgson, the famous "Lewis Carroll," a great mathematician who in his leisure produced the immortal Alice in Wonderland. Leacock has been called the most popular world humorist since Mark Twain. In the present instance, his "revelations" may not be valuable to the F.B.I., but they will prove a highly potent civilian morale builder. When high-powered diplomacy comes to be as innocuous as in the situation revealed by this story, the millennium will indeed be at hand.

MY REVELATIONS AS A SPY

IN MANY PEOPLE the very name "Spy" excites a shudder of apprehension; we Spies, in fact, get quite used to being shuddered at. None of us Spies mind it at all. Whenever I enter a hotel and register myself as a Spy I am quite accustomed to see a thrill of fear run round the clerks, or clerk, behind the desk.

Us Spies or We Spies—for we call ourselves both—are thus a race apart. None know us. All fear us. Where do we live? Nowhere. Where are we? Everywhere. Frequently we don't know ourselves where we are. The secret orders that we receive come from so high up that it is often forbidden to us even to ask where we are. A friend of mine, or at least a Fellow Spy—us spies have no friends—one of the most brilliant men in the Hungarian Secret Service, once spent a month in New York under the impression that he was in Winnipeg. If this happened to the most brilliant, think of the others.

All, I say, fear us. Because they know and have reason to know our power. Hence, in spite of the prejudice against us, we are able to move everywhere, to lodge in the best hotels, and enter any society that we wish to penetrate.

Let me relate an incident to illustrate this: A month ago I entered one of the largest of the New York hotels which I will merely call the B. hotel without naming it: to do so might blast it. We spies, in fact,

never name a hotel. At the most we indicate it by a number known only to ourselves, such as 1, 2, or 3.

On my presenting myself at the desk the clerk informed me that he had no room vacant. I knew this of course to be a mere subterfuge; whether or not he suspected that I was a spy I cannot say. I was muffled up, to avoid recognition, in a long overcoat with the collar turned up and reaching well above my ears, while the black beard and the moustache, that I had slipped on in entering the hotel, concealed my face. "Let me speak a moment to the manager," I said. When he came I beckoned him aside and taking his ear in my hand I breathed two words into it. "Good heavens!" he gasped, while his face turned as pale as ashes. "Is it enough?" I asked. "Can I have a room, or must I breathe again?" "No, no," said the manager, still trembling. Then, turning to the clerk: "Give this gentleman a room," he said, "and give him a bath."

What these two words are that will get a room in New York at once I must not divulge. Even now, when the veil of secrecy is being lifted, the international interests involved are too complicated to permit it. Suffice it to say that if these two had failed I know a couple of others still better.

I narrate this incident, otherwise trivial, as indicating the astounding ramifications and the ubiquity of the international spy system. A similar illustration occurs to me as I write. I was walking the other day with another gentleman—on upper B. way between the T. Building and the W. Garden.

"Do you see that man over there?" I said, pointing from the side of the street on which we were walking on the sidewalk to the other side opposite to the side that we were on.

"The man with the straw hat?" he asked. "Yes, what of him?"

"Oh, nothing," I answered, "except that he's a Spy!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed my acquaintance leaning up against a lamppost for support. "A Spy! How do you know that? What does it mean?"

I gave a quiet laugh—we spies learn to laugh very quietly. "Ha!" I said, "that is my secret, my friend. *Verbum sapientius! Che sarà sarà! Yodel doodle doo!*"

My acquaintance fell in a dead faint upon the street. I watched them take him away in an ambulance. Will the reader be surprised to learn that among the white-coated attendants who removed him I recognized no less a person than the famous Russian spy Poulispantsoff. What he was doing there I could not tell. No doubt his orders came from so high up that he himself did not know. I had seen him only twice before—once when we were both disguised as Zulus at Buluwayo, and once in the interior of China, at the time when Poulispantsoff made his secret entry into Tibet concealed in a tea-case. He was inside the tea-

passport and a photograph that will answer the purpose. The likeness is not great, but it is sufficient."

"But," I objected, abashed for a moment, "this photograph is of a man with whiskers and I am, unfortunately, clean-shaven."

"The orders are imperative," said Von Gestern, with official hauteur. "You must start to-night! You can grow whiskers this afternoon."

"Very good," I replied.

"And now to the business of your mission," continued the Baron. "The United States, as you have perhaps heard, is making war against Germany."

"I have heard so," I replied.

"Yes," continued Von Gestern. "The fact has leaked out,—how we do not know,—and is being widely reported. His Imperial Majesty has decided to stop the war with the United States." I bowed.

"He intends to send over a secret treaty of the same nature as the one recently made with his recent Highness the recent Czar of Russia. Under this treaty Germany proposes to give to the United States the whole of equatorial Africa and in return the United States is to give to Germany the whole of China. There are other provisions, but I need not trouble you with them. Your mission relates, not to the actual treaty, but to the preparation of the ground." I bowed again.

"You are aware, I presume," continued the Baron, "that in all high international dealings, at least in Europe, the ground has to be prepared. A hundred threads must be unravelled. This the Imperial Government itself cannot stoop to do. The work must be done by agents like yourself. You understand all this already, no doubt?" I indicated my assent.

"These, then, are your instructions," said the Baron, speaking slowly and distinctly, as if to impress his words upon my memory. "On your arrival in the United States you will follow the accredited methods that are known to be used by all the best spies of the highest diplomacy. You have no doubt read some of the books, almost manuals of instruction, that they have written?"

"I have read many of them," I said.

"Very well. You will enter, that is to say, enter and move everywhere in the best society. Mark specially, please, that you must not only enter it but you must move. You must, if I may put it so, get a move on." I bowed.

"You must mix freely with the members of the Cabinet. You must dine with them. This is a most necessary matter and one to be kept well in mind. Dine with them often in such a way as to make yourself familiar to them. Will you do this?"

"I will," I said.

"Very good. Remember also that in order to mask your purpose you

must constantly be seen with the most fashionable and most beautiful women of the American capital. Can you do this?"

"Can I?" I said.

"You must if need be"—and the Baron gave a most significant look which was not lost upon me—"carry on an intrigue with one or, better with several of them. Are you ready for it?"

"More than ready," I said.

"Very good. But this is only a part. You are expected also to familiarise yourself with the leaders of the great financial interests. You are to put yourself on such a footing with them as to borrow large sums of money from them. Do you object to this?"

"No," I said frankly, "I do not."

"Good! You will also mingle freely in Ambassadorial and foreign circles. It would be well for you to dine, at least once a week, with the British Ambassador. And now one final word"—here Von Gestern spoke with singular impressiveness—"as to the President of the United States."

"Yes," I said.

"You must mix with him on a footing of the most open-handed friendliness. Be at the White House continually. Make yourself in the fullest sense of the words the friend and adviser of the President. All this I think is clear. In fact, it is only what is done, as you know, by all the masters of international diplomacy."

"Precisely," I said.

"Very good. And then," continued the Baron, "as soon as you find yourself sufficiently en rapport with everybody—or I should say," he added in correction, for the Baron shares fully in the present German horror of imported French words, "when you find yourself sufficiently in enggeknüpfterverwandschaft with everybody, you may then proceed to advance your peace terms. And now, my dear fellow," said the Baron, with a touch of genuine cordiality, "one word more. Are you in need of money?"

"Yes," I said.

"I thought so. But you will find that you need it less and less as you go on. Meantime, good-bye, and best wishes for your mission."

Such was, such is, in fact, the mission with which I am accredited. I regard it as by far the most important mission with which I have been accredited by the Wilhelmstrasse. Yet I am compelled to admit that up to the present it has proved unsuccessful. My attempts to carry it out have been baffled. There is something perhaps in the atmosphere of this republic which obstructs the working of high diplomacy. For over five months now I have been waiting and willing to dine with the American Cabinet. They have not invited me. For four weeks I sat

each night waiting in the J. hotel in Washington with my suit on ready to be asked. They did not come near me.

Nor have I yet received an intimation from the British Embassy inviting me to an informal lunch or to midnight supper with the Ambassador. Everybody who knows anything of the inside working of the international spy system will realize that without these invitations one can do nothing. Nor has the President of the United States given any sign. I have sent word to him, in cipher, that I am ready to dine with him on any day that may be convenient to both of us. He has made no move in the matter.

Under these circumstances an intrigue with any of the leaders of fashionable society has proved impossible. My attempts to approach them have been misunderstood—in fact, have led to my being invited to leave the J. hotel. The fact that I was compelled to leave it, owing to reasons that I cannot reveal, without paying my account, has occasioned unnecessary and dangerous comment. I connect it, in fact, with the singular attitude adopted by the B. hotel on my arrival in New York, to which I have already referred.

I have therefore been compelled to fall back on revelations and disclosures. Here again I find the American atmosphere singularly uncongenial. I have offered to reveal to the Secretary of State the entire family history of Ferdinand of Bulgaria for fifty dollars. He says it is not worth it. I have offered to the British Embassy the inside story of the Abdication of Constantine for five dollars. They say they know it and knew it before it happened. I have offered, for little more than a nominal sum, to blacken the character of every reigning family in Germany. I am told that it is not necessary.

Meantime, as it is impossible to return to Central Europe, I expect to open either a fruit store or a peanut stand very shortly in this great metropolis. I imagine that many of my former colleagues will soon be doing the same!